Buddhism in the Western Himalaya

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A Study of the Tabo Monastery

Laxman S. Thakur

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For
ta po yi dge 'dun sde chen po
and
in memory of
Grandmama and Grandpapa

Preface

The first volume of The New Indo-Tibetica resulted from village-to-village archaeological explorations carried out by me in the border districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur since the late 1980s. The preliminary draft of a paper, 'Tabo monastery revisited' was presented at the Calcutta session of the Indian History Congress, in 1990, and its revised version at the International Congress of Asian and North-African Studies, Hong Kong, in 1993. Sections of chapters II, III, IV and VII were read at the national and international conferences.[1] We began our scientific survey with the accurate measurements of all temples and carried out an authentic documentation in early November 1988.[2] Fortunately, the measurement data of a statistical nature collected and analysed in this study would perhaps remain the only authoritative records of a monument whose original architectonic was totally changed by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1991. Even though the earlier drawings of the complex prepared by Romi Khosla and his associates were inaccurate, many scholars have used the measurements and drawings, without making use of the *sūtradhāra*'s cord for further verification.

The analysis of Tabo monastery presented here differs considerably both in methods and scope from the earlier accounts of A.H. Francke (1914) and G. Tucci (1935; 1988). Chapter I locates Tabo and a dozen other contemporaneous settlements in the hetrogeneous physical environment of Lahaul-Spiti. The continued movement of merchants, monks, and art technologies along the trade route, transforming a wide

[1]The important presentations are listed in the bibliography.

[2]The following is the itinerary of our stay at Tabo: 7–12 November 1988, 26–28 June 1989, 21–25 June 1992, 23–27 June 1993, 29 June–7 July 1994, 9–13 November 1995, 26 June–4 July 1996 and 5–10 June 1997.

variety of cultures, sustained pastoral and ecclesiastical communities in the complex cultural and economic networks. Without understanding the early history of the region it was indeed impossible to make an estimate of Tabo's Buddhist environs and its numerous patrons over the millennium. Chapter II uncovers the pre-Buddhist status of Tabo and its gradual transformation to Buddhism during the 'second diffusion'. The evolutionary sequence of nine temples has been established through a comparative analysis of all available data including the corpus of Śāradā and Tibetan inscriptions. The religious expressions evident in each phase of the architectural development reflect the preferences of the patrons and the chief monks vis-à-vis different Buddhist philosophical doctrines.

Textual sources and the technical know-how used for the sculptural productions have been discussed in chapter IV. The method by which the artists produced splendid manifestations of Mahāyāna Buddhism in artistic visual forms, using clay, wood and stone, seems to be one of the incredible legacies of the numerous artists including Yasā and Rāmu. The *mudrā* of each deity and its corresponding relationship to each *maṇḍala* has been examined. The murals, discussed in chapters V and VI, document the lives of the people from diverse social strata who passed through and patronized Tabo. The paintings also record trade, costumes, customs, legends, Sūtras and Tantras (sacred scriptures). The later murals show the transformation of Indian Buddhism into its Tibetan form incorporating the iconographic forms of the Tibetan schools. The murals of Tabo unquestionably constitute a remarkable repository of information about the monastic complex during the last one thousand years.

The majority of the epigraphs translated and discussed in chapter VII, provide striking insight into the history and culture of the region. The orthographic and palaeographic analysis which precede the sections on 'text' and 'translation' would prove of seminal importance for the proper assessment of the library housing precious collections of the *bKa'-'gyur* and *bsTan-'gyur*.

The monastic complex faces many threats which need immediate attention. The basements of the temples need to be strengthened. Scientific equipment should be installed to monitor environmental conditions—wind speed, solar radiation, humidity and precipitation—and their impact on the complex. This mass of information could be used to formulate a strategy to develop preservation and tourism, and Tabo should be entered into the list of 'World Heritage Sites'. Scientists and

preservationists all over the world, especially those who have considerable experience in preserving monuments in the arid zones, should devise better and long term strategies to save the cultural legacy of Tabo for posterity. It is to be hoped that the Buddhist community of Tabo will not allow any scholar to move any *dpe-cha* (sacred books) out of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ for each folio is fragile and easily damaged. No artificial light should be allowed in any of the temples and no tube lights should be fixed on the ceilings. Instead, microfilm copies of all manuscripts should be prepared by our premier institutions such as the National Archives of India and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts.

The list of all persons who helped us during the last ten years is too long to be given here. We owe an enormous amount to K. Angrup Lahuli and Sempa Dorje for translating three paper inscriptions from Tibetan into Hindi. The scholars with whom I remained in touch include Lokesh Chandra, P. Pal, V.S. Negi, David L. Snellgrove, Deborah Klimburg-Salter, E. Steinkellner, Heather Stoddard, Christian Luczanits and Christina A. Scherrer-Schaub. Dilwar Sharma accompanied me to Tabo on several occasions and helped us in numerous ways within and outside the monastic complex. Grateful thanks to Tashi Angrup, the chowkidar of the PWD rest-house; G.S. Kutlehria and his son; Professor D.S. Marwah of the Indira Gandhi Medical College; Dr. Rajeev Tuli, Rajendra Bodh and Gopal Krishan.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the monks of Tabo monastery, headed by the *dge-bśes* bSod-nams dbang-'dus and Lama Tshe-bstan bzang-po, who were always willing to co-operate. Lastly, Renu kept the domestic expenditure at bare minimum so that I could finance my travels and studies. Sahil always asked inquisitive questions at the conclusion of each trip. I could not join my family in times of joy and grief for over two years but remained confined to complete this work.

Simla LAXMAN S. THAKUR
October 1997

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(BLACK AND WHITE)

(Colour Plates)

(All drawings and photographs are by the author)

Abbreviations

AA	*Artibus Asiae*, Zurich
AI	*Ancient India*, New Delhi
AO	*Acta Orientalia*, Copenhagen
AOH	*Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Budapest
AR	*Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta
ASI	*Archaeological Survey of India*, Reports by Cunningham, et al.
ASI AR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*
ASI NIS	Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series
BEFEO	*Bulletin de l'École Francaise d'Extrême Orient*, Paris
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London
BST	Buddhist Sanskrit Texts
CAJ	*Central Asiatic Journal*, Wiesbaden
CBM	*Collected Biographical Material About Lo-chen Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and His Subsequent Reembodiments*
CSSH	*Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Michigan
EI	*Epigraphica Indica*, Calcutta and Delhi
EW	*East and West*, Rome
GJ	*The Geographical Journal*, London
GR	*The Geographical Review*, New York
HJAS	*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Massachusetts
IA	*The Indian Antiquary*, Bombay
IAR	*Indian Archaeology—A Review*, New Delhi
IESHR	*The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Delhi
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta
JA	*Journal Asiatique*, Paris

JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, New Haven
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*, Michigan
JASB	*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta
JBORS	*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Soceity*, Patna
JBRS	*Journal of Bihar Research Society*, Patna
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Leiden
JIH	*Journal of Indian History*, Trivandrum
JOR	*Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras
JPASB	*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta
JPHS	*Journal of the Punjab Historical Society*, Lahore
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London
JRCAS	*Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, London
JRGS	*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, London
JRSA	*Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, London
JUPHS	*Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society*, Lucknow
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, Delhi
MGSI	*Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*, Calcutta
OA	*Oriental Art*, Surrey
PIHC	*Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*
RGSI	*Records of the Geological Survey of India*, Calcutta
STTS	*Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha*
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East*
TRAS	*Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London
TT	*The Tibetan Tripitaka*, Tokyo–Kyoto
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gasellschaft*, Wiesbaden

Note on Transcription and Sign Critics

The most familiar system of diacritical marks has been used for Sanskrit and Pāli words earlier adopted in my *The Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*. For Tibetan words I have deviated slightly from Turrell Wylie's system ('A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription', *HJAS*, vol. 22, 1959, pp. 261–7). Deviation occurs in the use of *ṅa* for *nga*, *ña* for *nya* and *śa* for *sha*; for other Tibetan characters Wylie's system seems to be the most conveniant.

The following *sign critics* are used in the editing of the Romanized Tibetan texts and their English translations:

<abc>	Letters omitted in the original text, added by the author.
[abc]	Illegible or effaced letters, supplied by the author.
[xxx]	Illegible letters, number indicated by crosses.
[...]	Illegible or missing.
[±3]	Illegible letters, approximate number indicated by a numeral with ±.
(abc)	Translator's note.
(ø)	Letter(s) deleted by the writer of the inscription.
xxx	The portion of the text between stars is inserted below the line.
(?)	Doubtful reading in text and translation.

The reversed *gi-gu* sign is indicated by an angular stroke above *í* only in the Romanized texts.



I

Ecological and Economic Setting

Tabo, the name having numerous variants in Tibetan, situated in Spiti basin of the Trans-Himalayan zone of Himachal Pradesh, lies at the height of 3,242 m on the left bank of the Spiti river. Spiti is one of the tehsils of Lahaul-Spiti district, extending between 31°44′57″ and 32°59′57″ north latitude, and 76°46′29″ and 78°41′34″ east longitude.[1] The district is one of the most inhospitable tracts of the Himalayan mountain system and has rightly been called the Himalayan cold desert.

It is necessary to dedicate a few pages to the peculiar ecological and economic setting of Lahaul-Spiti before analysing the Tabo monastery and its Buddhist environs. The emergence of Tabo's monastic centre is not an isolated fact but is closely associated with the emergence of a dozen other Buddhist establishments which inhabit the major valleys even now.

Lahaul-Spiti is the largest district of Himachal Pradesh as it has 13,835 sq km area which constitutes 24.85 per cent of the state. The entire population of 30,820 is rural—16,749 males and 14,071 females—according to 1991 census estimates.[2] The district has the lowest population density in the state (i.e. 2 persons per sq km). Apart from sharing its boundaries with Kinnaur, Kulu, Kangra and Chamba districts of Himachal, its northern and eastern frontiers flank the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and Tibet respectively.

PHYSIOGRAPHY AND VILLAGE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

The geographical and cultural setting of Lahaul-Spiti have been described differently by many authors. Such typology was based primarily on the traditional classification used by the British settlement officers

for the convenience of making an easy assessment of revenue from each *koṭhī* which had several inhabited villages under its jurisdiction. On the basis of hetrogeneous physiographic factors, Lahaul-Spiti can be divided into five regions: (i) Pir Panjal Range, (ii) Chandrabhaga Valley, (iii) Greater Himalayan Glaciated Range, (iv) Malung Basin, and (v) Spiti Basin.

Pir Panjal Range

The Pir Panjal range in the district forms a narrow strip along the districts of Chamba, Kangra and Kulu. Several perennial rivers originate in this range and join the Chandrabhaga river. Shikar Beh, at 6200 m, is the highest point in this range. The Rohtang pass (*ro-thaṅ-la*) links the district of Lahaul-Spiti with Kulu and the Panjab plains through the national highway, number 21. The geology of this region is characterized by granites and Jutogh group, and the soils are of Udalfs category. Only eight villages of Udaipur sub-tehsil and a small portion of the south-eastern part of Lahaul tehsil fall in this range. All villages are situated on the left bank of the Chandrabhaga river and have populations of less than one hundred.

Chandrabhaga Valley

This valley is formed by Chandra and Bhaga rivers which originate in the Greater Himalayan Glaciated Range—the Chandra from Chandra Tal lake and the Bhaga from Suraj Tal. The Kunzam pass (4,590 m) poses a great barrier between Lahaul and Spiti, and communication is possible only through the state highway (number 32) between mid-July and mid-October. Geological formations of this valley are composed of the Jutogh, Central Gneiss, Granite and Haimanta groups. Several patches of vegetation are seen on the middle and lower belts.

The heaviest concentration of population is in this valley. Out of a total of 337 villages in Lahaul-Spiti district, 277 villages (82.19 per cent) are located here (140 villages of Lahaul tehsil and 137 villages of Udaipur sub-tehsil). Important cultural centres such as Gumrang, Shashur, Kardang Zholing, Kolong, Gemur, Ghandhola (Tupchiling), Gondla,[3] Triloknath, and Udaipur are also situated in this valley. The region has a unique distinction, for major trade routes coming from Kulu and Spiti pass through this valley: one of them from Tandi goes along the Bhaga river to Ladakh via the Baralacha pass, the other along the

Chandrabhaga river to Kashmir. Agriculture and trade are the predominant occupations of the people. Apart from growing traditional crops such as wheat, barley, kathu and kuth, the people have started cultivating potatoes, hops and peas on a large scale. The change in agricultural production has yielded good results and Lahaul's economy is poised for radical changes.

GREATER HIMALAYAN GLACIATED RANGE

North-western parts of Udaipur sub-tehsil, the eastern half and the north-western parts of Lahaul tehsil and central, eastern and south-western parts of Spiti tehsil are prime representatives of the Greater Himalayan Glaciated Range. This region comprises about 40 per cent of the total area of the district. The region has several high snow peaks and glaciers (Bara and Chota Shingri, Gungstang, Kailash and Miyar). Most of the rivers and rivulets which form the major drainage system of the district originate in this range. They include the Chandra, Bhaga, Miyar, Thirot, Jankari, Spiti, Pin and Lingti. High passes Kunzam and Pin Parbati connect the Bhaga valley with Malung basin and Ladakh, the Chandrabhaga valley with Spiti basin and also the Bhaga valley with Kulu district. Granites, Triassic formations and the Haimanta group are prime representatives of this region's geology. The entire region is uninhabited and devoid of vegetation; only five villages of Udaipur sub-tehsil are temporarily populated for a few weeks in the summer months.

MALUNG BASIN

The Malung basin is an unmeasured and uninhabited area covering the north-western part of Spiti, and the north-eastern extremes of Lahaul tehsil. The geological structures of this region consist primarily of Triassic and Jurassic formations. The highest mountain road in the world passes through this region over the Baralacha pass and links the Bhaga valley with Ladakh. This region offers ample opportunities for trekkers and mountain-climbers.

SPITI BASIN

This basin comprises the southern and eastern parts of Spiti tehsil with a population of 9,301. It has the lowest male–female ratio, 1000 : 811 in the district. The Spiti river and its two main tributaries, the Lingti

and Pin rivers, traverse the region from three different directions. Another river, the Parechu, which originates near Tanglung and the Parang pass, runs north-east and joins the Spiti river at Samdo in Kinnaur. Out of a total of forty-seven villages in Spiti tehsil, twenty-three are located on the left bank of the Spiti river, twelve on the right side and twelve on both banks of the Pin river.[4]

The geological formations of the Spiti basin need no introduction because they have been studied in great length by geologists such as Stoliczka (1865)[5], Hayden (1904)[6], Uhlig (1903–10)[7], Berthelsen (1951)[8], Pascoe (1950, 1959)[9], Wadia (1957)[10], Arkell (1956)[11], and Gansser (1964)[12]. The lowest strata is composed of Pre-Cambrian rocks followed by Cambrian, Ordovician, Carboniferous, Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous layers. The classical Spiti formations together with Trias made the Spiti region world famous. Spiti ammonites have been sold as amulets since ancient times, and frequently deposited by the Buddhist and the Bon pilgrims at the intersection of major trade routes and bridle paths, and also on high passes, thus confusing geologists by their unnatural location.

It is possible to approach Spiti from Lahaul and Kulu through the Rohtang, the Hamta and the Kunzam passes; from Kinnaur through the Manerang, the Warang, the Runang, the Hangrang and the Bhaba passes, and from Ladakh through the Parang pass. Most of the villages in this valley are located in the middle belt. Curiously enough, it is not the twists and turns of the Spiti river which have determined the village settlement patterns, but the snow-capped peaks and major perennial rivulets originating from them: constant soil erosion by glaciers every year during the summer months, with melting snow bringing down parts of the mountain, thus forming deep *nallas* and flat table land in the middle belt. The mean elevation of the Spiti valley is much higher than the Chandrabhaga valley which is lower, narrower and thickly populated. G.C. Barnes who was responsible for the first comprehensive land settlement of Spiti remarked that no village in the region had irrigational facilities, which seems quite unlikely. According to the census of 1981, the irrigated area in Spiti constituted 95.45 per cent of the total cultivable land, whereas in Lahaul tehsil it amounted to 55.17 per cent and in Udaipur sub-tehsil to 60.48 per cent.[13]

The Spiti basin shares similar physio-cultural characteristics with eight villages of Hangrang sub-tehsil of Kinnaur. Buddhist monastic centres such as Tabo, Lari (now in complete ruins) Dankhar (the capital of the former Spiti principality), Lhalung, Kungri, Tengyud, Kaza, Ki,

Kibbar, Rangrik and Mane flourished along the trade route which passes through Spiti. The agricultural produce from small patches of arable land along the Spiti, Pin and Lingti rivers, along with the gifts, donations and offerings from merchants provided the surest means of sustenance for its Buddhist community through the millennium.

WESTERN HIMALAYAN TRADE ROUTES

Western Himalayan trade routes are not given adequate attention by geographers, economists and historians. A few scholars have realized the importance of the geographical location of Himachal, in general, and Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, in particular, and that the region is situated between two trade routes of international significance–the Silk route and the Grand Trunk Road. The former linked several provinces of China and Central Asia with the Arabian, Persian and Mediterranean world, and the latter connected Pataliputra with Tampralipti, in the east, to Taxila, in the north-west. There were a series of link routes which sustained the trade traffic on these routes. The trade routes discussed below have been worked out with the help of archaeological findings discovered from several halting stations or centres of powers or trade centres which emerged along these routes. Several micro regions of the western Himalaya specialized in natural products, agricultural produce and manufactures. From archaeological findings it becomes apparent that at least four major trade routes traversed the region from the third century BC onwards. They were further linked with routes of lesser importance directly connected with the hilly interior areas of Himachal.

Route no. 1 (Fig. 1) entered the hills of Himachal at Parwanoo where two inscriptions, written in mixed Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī, and Śāradā scripts are still to be found, inscribed on a huge boulder locally known as Kali Pathari. The locality of Takshal stands in its vicinity. It is quite possible that a mint might have existed there in the past. This route passed through Sabathu, Hat Kot, Arki (from where punch-marked coins have been discovered) and Okhru. Recently silver coins of the Audumbaras have been found in Okhru, a place which has acted as an important relay station since the beginning of the use of metallic currency for trade transactions.[14] One of its branches goes from Arki to Bilaspur where it meets another route which comes from Kiratpur and Ropar (now called the national highway number 21). From Okhru it traverses the mid-Himalayan hills and passes through Kao and Mamel where architectural and sculptural remnants of tenth and eleventh centuries survive to this

day. It turns along the Sutlej river and meets another route at Kingal. From there, it passes through Dattanagar, Nirath, Rampur, Basara, Gaura, Sarahan and Wangtu. An old Hindustan–Tibet road which descends from Narkanda down to Kotgarh joins it at Nirath. The discovery of some Kuṇinda coins and the presence of the *nāgara*-style Sun temple indicate that Nirath provided essential items to the caravan traders for their arduous journey through the Sutlej valley.[15] Basara, an unexplored site of immense archaeological potentiality, on the left bank of the Sutlej, possesses several *nāgara* temples of the pre-Pratihāra phase. It seems likely that the name of the Bushahr state derived from the same locality. Prior to the establishment of the state capital at Kamru (Tibetan: Mon or sMon) in the Baspa valley it seems the capital was located at Basara. From Rampur two routes branched off towards outer Saraj and Kulu over the Jalori and Bashleo passes. Nirmand was an important nodal station located on a route leading to Banjar via the Bashleo pass. The existence of two principalities in outer Saraj during the seventh and eighth centuries amply demonstrates how economic surplus generated through trade produced an influential governing class bearing the titles *mahāsāmanta* and *mahārāja*.[16] Farther up from Wangtu, after crossing a bridge over the Wangor rivulet, there is a bridle path over the Bhaba pass leading to the Pin valley of Spiti where there is a famous Kungri monastery. The main route passed through Chagaon, Urni, Rogi, Chini, Pangi, Rarang, Akpa, Janghi, Labrang and Kanam. All the places mentioned above are now situated at an elevation higher than the present national highway number 22 which goes directly via Tapri to Powari and from there to Pooh (sPu). Kanam is a well-known settlement where the Hungarian Buddhist scholar Alexander Csoma de Körös stayed from June 1827 to June 1831. Lama Hira Chand informed me that an old temple founded by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po was demolished around sixty years ago and a new one known as the Kha-che lha-khaṅ reconstructed at the same spot.[17]

An old route from Kanam to Sunnam (Gerard and William Lloyd: Soongnum, Fraser: Soognam) passed through the Runang pass. The same went up the Shyaso river through Gyabang and Ropa (Ro-dpag, Ro-spag and Ro-pag) across the Manerang pass to Spiti. The main route, however, continued via Koro (dKor) and Pooh. The latter was a stellar commercial centre from where the main route bifurcated into two: one of them linked the lower Spiti basin to the Sutlej valley across the Hangrang pass and the second, after a steep descent of about 300 m reached the vicinity of the bank of the Sutlej river at Dabling. After

crossing a bridge it ascended to Namgya and from there to Tibet over a Shipki defile. Pooh was a meeting point for traders coming from Kulu, Simla Hills, Garhwal, Spiti, Ladakh, Bushahr and Tibet. All imports and exports from the north-Indian plains and Tibet passed through Pooh. The establishment of a gTsug-lag-khaṅ by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po at Pooh is corroborated by an inscription at Koro.[18]

It would be pertinent to mention another link route which joined route number 1 from the Baspa valley. Sangla and Kamru (the capital of the former Bushahr state before it was moved to Sarahan) are twin villages situated on the right bank of the Baspa river. Sangla was linked with Bushahr, Tibet and Garhwal through half a dozen routes. An account of Sangla's interlinkages with its neighbouring regions was given by Alexander Gerard in June 1821:

> Sungla, the chief place, although consisting of no more than forty houses, is of great note . . . and from it roads lead across the Passes to the S.E., South and S.W., no less than twelve in number, besides one to Chinese Tartary, and two to the interior on the north; the southern passes lead to the upper parts of Gurhwal, and different portions of Busahir: . . . all articles from the plains were imported to Sungla, and exports were principally salt, a little borax, and some wool. The Passes to the S.E. and South, to Gurhwal, are Sungla or Booras, Kimleea, Seenga, Marja, Lumbeea, Barga and Nulgoon; these are from 15,000 to 17,000 feet, those to Busahir on the S.W. are Roopeen, Ghoosool, Goonas, Neebrung andBoorendo from 15,000 to 16,000 feet.[19]

It is interesting to note is that the two frontier-most villages of Kinnaur—Kunu and Tsarang—in the Tidang valley were on the itinerary of the annual Kailāśa *parikramā* (circumambulation) performed by the followers of the Bonpos, the Brahmanists and the Buddhists. The itinerary given below has remained unchanged to date. This annual pilgrimage begins from Kupa. The pilgrims after visiting the Harang peak would pass through Mebur, Barang, Tangling, Powari, Purbani, Ribba, Rispa, Morang, Thangi, Lambara, Tsarang, Lalanti (uninhabited), Chitkul, Rakcham, and finally arrive at their journey's end at Sangla. Interestingly, Rin-chen bzaṅ-po after assessing the potentiality of certain localities to sustain a Buddhist community, founded gTsug-lag-khaṅs at Thangi (Saṅs or Śaṅ raṅ) and Tsarang respectively.[20]

Route number 2 linked Uttar Pradesh, to Sirmaur and Simla districts. The main route entered the cis-Giri and Kiardadun valleys of Sirmaur from Kalsi (Dehradun district of U.P.) where the Mauryan king, Aśoka, had a set of fourteen major rock edicts inscribed.[21] Almost opposite it, on the left bank of the river Yamuna, has been found a brick-built altar

with, several inscribed bricks. From the inscriptions we learn that the fourth *aśvamedha* sacrifice was performed at Jagatgram by king Śīla-varman in the third century AD.[22] From Kalsi the route crossed through Paonta Sahib, Majra, Kolar, Nahan, Jottok (not to be confused with Jutogh near Simla), Sarahan and Nainatikar. One of its minor branches went towards Shillai and Jaunsar Bawar. However, another route linked Sirmauri Tal and Dadahu and went further up along the river Giri to Neripul and Balag. The last place referred to has preserved two excellent *nāgara* temples and a host of stone sculptures discussed elsewhere.[23]

Another branch of route number 2 from Kalsi covered the peripheral villages of Dehradun district and entered the Simla district from Arakot and Tiuni. The people of the former Jubbal state had easy access to the hilly regions of Uttarakhanda through this route. Temple complexes at Sawra and Hat Koti, both near Jubbal, owe their art and style to Kanauj, especially, to the Pratihāra school of art.[24] It also acted as a 'pilgrimage road' to various *tīrthas* such as Haridwar, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Route number 3 followed the same course as the national highway number 21 up to Mandi via Bilaspur. One offshoot of it turned towards the west and linked places such as Baijnath (Kīragrāma), Palampur (Pralamba), Nagrota Bagwan, Kangra, and finally reached Pathankot (Pratiṣṭhāna). The ancient town of Kīragrāma was a major frontier station under its *rājānaka* Lakṣmaṇacandra in the beginning of the thirteenth century AD.[25] The mention of a *maṇḍapikā* (custom-house) in the Baijnath *praśastis* indicates that all imports and exports were taxed. Two merchant brothers Mānyuka and Āhuka raised a temple at a site where there stood an ancient stone *Śivaliṅga*. The localities, in the catch-ment area of this route, Lakhamandal, Pathyar, Kanihara have yielded several Brahmanical and Buddhist antiquities. A regular traffic of traders on this route enabled the Buddhist communities to survive from around the first century BC to the seventh century AD. Traders and pilgrims who wanted to go to Nagarkot could stay for a night either at Chetru or Chari (not to be confused with Chahri near Pathyar), otherwise the caravan would move forward towards Pathankot.

Traders journeying to their Central Asian destinations would pass through the Kulu valley (Ñuṅ-ti) which provided enough halting stations in the woodlands along the river Bias (Vipāśa) where beasts of burden could easily be loaded and unloaded. The entire valley is dotted with numerous monuments. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited the Kulu valley from Tamasāvana and Jālaṇdhara. It seems likely that after crossing the Dulchi pass he entered the valley and went up to Naggar.

He did not visit either Lahaul or Ladakh. On the northern slope of the Rohtang pass (3,980 m) this route is joined by another route which comes from Spiti. Before we return to that route mention must be made of another crossroad connecting Chamba with Pathankot on the south, and Kishtawar in Jammu, and Kilar in Pangi on the west and the north. Chamba (ancient Champakā) was linked with the Panjab plains by three different lines of communication. Several roads across the high passes linked Chamba with Lahaul-Spiti, Zangskar and Jammu and Kashmir. Three main roads, all diverging from Pathankot, reached Chamba from different directions. The shortest road open throughout the year was via Shahpur in Kangra and Sihunta across the Basodan pass. The second route from Pathankot was via Sandhara and Phangota, and entered the Chamba territory at Kairi; and the third route passed through Dalhousie, Phar and Dunera.

The Pir Panjal area of Chamba district was linked with Lahaul-Spiti through Sach, Cheni, Marhu and Drati passes, and the Ravi basin through Kugti and Chobia passes. The discovery of several rock-carvings and inscriptions from Churah (Caturāha) and Pangi (Pāṅgati) amply corroborate the movements of people in these remote and inhospitable tracts in ancient and medieval times. It is appropriate to stress that the passes at 4,000 to 6,000 metres did not hinder the movement of people from either direction. The emergence of the cult of the mother goddess along these routes also attracted a good number of pilgrims to the annual festivals either at Devi-ri-kothi or at Mindhal. The main route starts from Chamba to Kilar over the Sach pass. One of its branches leaves the Pangi road about 14 km beyond Tisa and goes to Devi-ri-kothi. After crossing the Cheni pass the traders would reach Mindhal in Pangi. After crossing a bridge over the river one would reach Sach situated on the road coming from Margul to Kilar. Thereafter it bifurcates into two: one road going straight to Kishtawar and the other to Zangskar in Ladakh. Two passes were crossed frequently by the pilgrims between Lahaul and Bharmaur. The first is the Kugti pass, which links Bharmaur via Hadsar with Jobrang in Lahaul. It is probable that this was the pass crossed by Orgyan-pa, the Tibetan traveller, in the thirteenth century. Another is the Chobia pass which was crossed by those pilgrims who wanted to go directly from Bharmaur to Triloknath. Another road from Chamba went via Sundla, Langera and Thanala to Bhadrawah over the Pandari pass.

Lastly, an international trade route called, by T.G. Montgomerie, 'a great road', that was known to exist between Lhasa and Leh.[26] The

survey of this route from Lhasa to Mansarowar lake was made by the Pandit under the supervision of T.G. Montgomerie in 1865–6. Summarizing the result of the survey carried out by the Pandit, Montgomerie observes:

> Between the Mansarowar lake and Lhasa the Pundit travelled by the great road called the Jong-lam (or whor-lam), by means of which Chinese officials keep up their line of communication for 800 miles along the top of the Himalayan range from Lhasa, north of Assam, to Gartokh, north-east of Simla. . . . Starting from Gartokh on the Indus, at 15,500 feet above the sea, the road crosses the Kailas range by a very high pass, descends to about 15,000 feet in Nari Khorsum, the upper basin of the Sutlej and then coasting along the Rakas Tal, the Mansarowar, and another long lake, rises gradually to the Mariham-la pass, the watershed between the Sutlej and Brahmaputra, 15,500 feet above the sea.[27]

Despite the high elevation and desolate mountainous conditions, the road was well-maintained, one where several travellers could go abreast along with laden horses and yaks. There were twenty-two halting-places, called Tarjums, between Lhasa and Gartok. The distance between each Tarjum was anywhere from 20 to 70 miles. These Tarjums generally consisted of a house, or houses, made with locally available dried clay bricks.

This route bifurcated into two branches at Tirathpuri: one branch went along the Sutlej over the Shipki pass to India; the other towards Gartok, Rudok and Demchok in western Tibet. Gartok seems to have been an important commercial entrepot between Lhasa and Leh. There was also a direct route between Gaṛtok and Shipki traversed by Tucci in 1931. Since the emergence of the Tibetan kingdom under Sroṅ-btsan sgam-po it was absolutely necessary for the Tibetans to maintain a close network of communication on the Lhasa–Gartok road for two reasons. The first was to control the natural and animal products of western Tibet, such as gold, salt and the finest quality wool, and the second was to prevent the conquest of western Tibet. It was along this 'grand road' that several monastic centres cropped up rapidly after AD 1000. The survival of such centres depended primarily on the traffic created by trade. Once these centres became famous for artistic and scholastic accomplishments they attracted a regular flow of scholars and pilgrims.

From the Shipki pass the road descended along the left bank of the Sutlej to Namgya (rNam-rgyal). Traders who wanted to go to the kingdoms of Śatadru, Kulūta, Trigarta and the north-Indian plains would come to Pooh, while others would continue their journey by passing through Tashigang, Nako and Chango where they could be joined by



Temple
bKa'-gdams-pa, now dGe-lugs-pa
dGe-lugs-pa
bKa'-brgyud-pa
rÑin-ma-pa
Sa-skya-pa
bKa'-gdams-pa, now 'Brug-pa
L A D A K H
RUPSHU
T I B E T
AUTONOMOUS
REGION
C H A M B A
K A N G R A
K U L U
M A N D I
L A H U L
S P I T I
K I N N A U R
S I M L A
UTTARKASHI
Chenab
Kilar
Sach pass
Alwas
Mindhal
Sach
Tisa
Udapur
Miyar
Chandra bhaga valley
Bhaga
Tindi
Triloknath
Jalma
Gumrang
Tayul
Shashur
Tinoo
KEYLONG
Gushal
Tingal
CHAMBA
Tupchiling
Gondla
Kardang
Sissu
Zholing
Bharmaur
Ravi
Khaksar
Batal
Chatru
Baralacha pass
Molung Basin
Chandra
Greater Himalayas
To Leh
Hansa
Kiato
Parang pass
Losar
Kunzam pass
Glaciated Range
Chichim
Kibbar
Tengyud
Rangarik
Kaja
Domal
Lhalung
Tabo
Kyuling
Lidang
Lari
Gyu
Kaurik
Samdo
To Tibet
Kungri
Poh
Sumra
Sagnam
Khar
Mane
Shalkar
Chango
Mud
Nangthang
Leo
Nako
Tashigang
Namgya
Ropa
Pooh
Somang
Gya Bang
Shipki pass
Sunnam
Kanam
To Gartok
Lippa
Kothi
Morang
KALPA
Ribba
Thangi
Mane
Sangla
Kunu
Tsarang
Chitkul
Sihuna
DHARMASALA
Pathankot
Kanihara
Chetru
Palampur
Kangra
Pathyar
Baijnath
Manali
Rohtang pass
Nagar
NH 21
NH 20
KULU
Jari
Parbati
Jawalamukhi
Beas
Bajaura
Dayar
Pin Parbati pass
Nadaun
Sainj
HAMIRPUR
MANDI
Bhaba pass
Amb
Banjar
Bashleo pass
Sarahan
Sundarnagar
Jalori pass
Sarahan
Sutlej
Nichar
UNA
Ghumarwin
Ani
Rampur
Karsog
Nirmand
BILASPUR
Baragraon
Kumarsain
Markanda
Rohru
Pabbar
Arki
Hatkoti
Sawra
NH 22
SIMLA
Kotkhai
Nalagarh
Ghoona
LST
76°
77°
78°
79°
33°
32°
31°
KM 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 KM
Scale 1:1,000,000
1cm=10km

traders coming from the Sutlej valley over the Hangrang pass. From Chango the road continued along the Spiti river by way of Shalkhar, Samdo and Kaurik (Jacquemont: Khiri; Thomson: Kyuri). The Bushahri traders went directly from Kaurik to Gartok to secure their supply of gold, salt, borax and wool; the main route continued through Gyu, Lari, Tabo and Poh (sPogs or Pogs). The existence of lead mines at Poh brought merchants from Bushahr and Kulu, and possibly the local demands were met from the mines worked out at Poh. Before reaching Dankhar it met another route converging from the lower Sutlej valley over the Bhaba pass through the Kungri monastery. Sichling below Dankhar provided a vast table-land for pack animals to be unloaded for the night's halt. This route bifurcated into two branches near Rangrik: one branch passed through Ki and Kibbar towards Ladakh over the Parang La, the other entered into the Chandra valley by crossing the Kunzam pass. It seems likely that in former days Kibbar was a diverging station rather than Rangrik.

Tibetan traders pursuing their journey towards Ladakh via Parang La would pass through Dutung, Kiangdom and Karzok (bKor-rdzod).[28] At Debring this road met another crossroad coming from Lahaul and thereafter reached Leh via Gya and Shushot. An alternative route from Sarchu to Leh was also known which met the main route at Debring over the Lachalung pass. The route leading to the Chandra valley across the Kunzam pass met route number 3 at Gramphoo continuing from there to Tandi. It further bifurcated into two, one road passing through the Bhaga valley over the Baralacha pass to Leh. The second route from Keylong to Padum in Zangskar could be used only when the rivers were extremely low. Yaks which can easily cross the river can be taken along for part of the journey. The major trade traffic towards Leh passed through the Baralacha pass but pilgrims and traders who wanted to go to Triloknath, Margul, Chamba, Kishtawar and Kashmir would continue their journey through the Chandrabhaga valley. The caravan traders often liked to pay a short visit to Triloknath on the left bank of the river and stay for a night at Margul to pay their obeisance to Markulā Devī. A journey from Margul (Udaipur) to Kilar was both arduous and adventurous. Sapphire was rediscovered in 1883 in Padar, situated on this road. Kilar was linked with Kishtawar, and the latter with Leh. Leh was further intimately linked with Khotan, Yarkand, Tarim basin, Kashgar, Kucha and trans-Oxania on the north and Gilgit, Badakhshan to Sogdiana in the north-west.

MECHANICS OF INDO-TIBETAN TRADE THROUGH TRANS-HIMALAYA

A survey of major trade routes to and from Himachal would suggest that several independent and semi-independent principalities were involved in commercial activity over the centuries. It is not possible to give an exact volume of trade but certain observations can be made based on the pattern of trade and major items of imports and exports involved in the trans-Himalayan trade.

Each geographical-cum-cultural zone (or principality) specialized in certain agricultural products, natural produce (including animal products) and manufactures. Trade also created economic and political interdependence. Since this entire region was mountainous with high passes and perennial rivers, good-quality beasts of burden were required for transportation. In areas adjacent to the Panjab plains the traders used camels, mules and horses for carrying the products of the plains to the hills. In areas such as Chamba, Kulu, Lahaul-Spiti, Bushahr and Kinnaur a variety of animals were used for transportation, for example asses, ghoonts, yaks, goats and sheep. The selection of animals and the size of the load depended primarily on the nature of the route. For example, some of the passes used by the traders in Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Chamba would allow only the use of goats and sheep with 5 to 10 kg of load for a limited number of days in the summer months.

It is necessary to give a brief outline of the specific products of a few regions which participated in the complex network of the western Himalayan trade both short and long distance in nature. Trade items can be classified into two categories: (i) those items which were either produced locally or imported from the north-Indian plains and the north-west and thereafter exported to Tibet through three routes—the Shipki pass in Kinnaur, the Rohtang and Baralacha passes in Kulu and Lahaul-Spiti, and finally the Sach, Cheni, Kugti and Chobia passes in Chamba; (ii) western-Tibetan and Central-Asian products required either for local consumption or for further exporting to Ladakh, Kashmir, Panjab and to the Persian, Arabian and the Mediterranean worlds. In ancient times when boundaries were not well demarcated and people moved to and fro freely with merchandise, western Tibet had good trade relations with the Uttarakhanda region of Uttar Pradesh so admirably examined by G.W. Traill.[29] What is important to point out here is that each principality not only traded with its immediate neighbour, with whom it also shared boundaries, but also engaged in long-distance trade. This involvement

in long-distance trade depended primarily on an accessibility to trade routes. What is clear from the archaeology of trade routes and the extent of the boundaries of the different states is that no political authority in the region ever controlled any route wholly. Interestingly, the state of Kulu and Bushahr had benefited immensely from the trade because the former controlled route number 3 which passed through the Kulu valley to Central-Asian destinations, whereas the latter had unimpeded access to route number 1 beyond Rampur and the international route discussed above. An account of some items of trade that influenced the economy and the balance of trade in terms of income for a particular region of the western Himalaya is given later in this chapter. In passing, we have noticed how the emergence of institutions of an ecclesiastical nature generated *tīrthayātras* almost parallel to trade patterns which sustained the monastic establishments.

Sirmaur, although famous for its fine quality slates of Kamrao, did not contribute significantly to the Indo-Tibetan trade. But it produced surplus wheat, sugarcane, turmeric and ginger. It was not profitable for traders to carry wheat from Sirmaur to Western Tibet although there was a great demand for it. The hill states of Bilaspur and Simla were formerly parts of the Śatadru kingdom. Bilaspur's traditional crops, ginger, turmeric and wheat, were exported to Tibet and Ladakh. Iron and iron goods from Nawar in Rohru were in great demand in Tibet.[30] Some iron was also exported to Garhwal. Earlier, the iron trade was controlled by the villagers through local committees. But with the emergence of the Bushahr state the iron-mines of Nawar came under the control of the state. Kinnar Kailāśa located on the trade route attracted a large number of Buddhists and Bon-pos of Tibet for the annual *parikramā*. After the consecration of the gTsug-lag-khaṅs at places such as Ropa, Tsarang, Thangi and Pooh by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po traders, scholars and laymen were attracted to these complexes. A reference to a *nihelapati*[31] in the Nirmand copperplate indicates that the area around it produced indigo which might have been a profitable item of export to Tibet. Deodar wood required for doorframes, doorjambs and pillars of monasteries in Tibet was exported from the Tidang valley of Kinnaur. Even today, deodar trees of moderate height are available below Tsarang.[32]

The agricultural and mineral products of Mandi, Kulu and Kangra also reached Ladakhi and Tibetan markets. Mandi was wellknown for its iron manufactures, especially its axes, with fire-resistant properties. Kangra also had iron, lead and copper mines. Kulu exported grain in

large quantities. The agricultural produce of Kangra was exported to Ladakh and western Tibet through Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti. Frequent references to sugarcane and rice in the Chamba inscriptions suggest that these products were grown in abundance and exported to markets in Leh, Kishtawar and Bhadrawah.

Lahaul was renowned for its kuth (costus) production, as well as the sacred pilgrimage centres located at Ghandhola, Triloknath and Marul. Spiti, apart from exporting barley to Ladakh and Tibet, was known for black dye obtained from *parlo*, and yellow dye from *nyalo*.[33] Several medicinal plants from Lahaul-Spiti are mentioned in the *rGyud-zhi*, the text on which is based the entire system of Tibetan medicine. It is worthwhile to list a few medicinal plants and the areas where these were grown. Kuth (Sanskrit *kuṣṭhā*), was the natural product of Lahaul, grown in the entire Pattan valley and the catchment area of the Bhaga river near Keylong and Tandi. Its roots have anti-arthritic, antiseptic, disinfectant, stimulant, tonic and vermifugal properties. In the Roman Empire it was used as a spice, and also as perfume, finding its way into many of the ointments because it removed marks and blemishes from the skin. Its root was dug up and cut into small pieces, and exported to the Mediterranean world and Tibet. Ratanjot (*Arnebia euchroma*), an equally important natural product, was grown in the Chandra and Bhaga valleys of Lahaul and places such as Kibbar, Rongtong, Chicham, Dumla, Sagnam, Lang Za, Ladarcha and Lingti in Spiti. Its root was used in dyeing silk, wool, foodstuffs and hair oils. Other products included kalazira (*Carum carvi*), patharcat *(Bergenia stracheyi*) chhe *(Ephedra gerardiana*), karu (*Gentiana kurroe royle*), shukpa (*Juniperus communis*), gaojaban (*Onosma hispida*), banajawain (*Thymus serpyllum*) and charma (seabuckthorn). Seabuckthorn is grown almost all over the district both as a shrub and as a tree. Its fruits are the richest source of vitamin C, and its seeds yield oil rich in fats, and its jelly is useful for liver and lung complaints. Dr Yashwant Singh Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Solan, has set up a seabuckthorn farm at Tabo in collaboration with ICEMOD, Kathmandu.

Items of export from Tibet included gold, beangee and shawl wool, borax, salt, sheep and goats, horses, musk, tea, Narbissi (zedoary) and a certain ferocious breed of dogs. India imported gold from western Tibet from the time of the *Mahābhārata*. The *pipīlika* gold (gold dug by ants) was presented by the kings of the Himalayan region to Yudhiṣṭhira.[34] Herodotus was the earliest Greek writer to refer to gold-digging ants. Who were these gold-digging ants? They 'were originally

neither, as ancients supposed, real ants, nor, as so many eminent men of learning have supposed, larger animals mistaken for ants on account of their appearance and subterranean habits, but men of flesh and blood . . . .'[35] These Tibetan miners looked like ants because they used to wear black yak-skins to protect themselves from the extreme cold in the gold-mines of Thok-Jalung, Thok-Niammo and Thok-Sarling.[36]

The demand for borax increased substantially in India owing to the extension of cultivation for which good-quality agricultural tools were required. With the emergence of temples as land-owning institutions and the grant of lands by the rulers and their subordinates to beneficiaries, extensive uncultivated and barren land was brought under cultivation. A constant demand for good tools could be met by improved ironsmithy. The demand for borax in the smelting of iron and other metals was met from Tibet. Tibet was the only source of borax for the entire south-Asian region in ancient and medieval times.[37] Borax was also used as an ingredient in the manufacture of ink. Its trade was of such magnitude along the Indo-Tibetan border that an entire community engaged in borax trade from Kumaon-Garhwal was known as *ṭaṅgaṇa*, and they established a settlement called Ṭaṅgaṇapura.[38]

Wool for shawls formed another item of trade from Tibet to India. According to J.D. Cunningham the value of this wool (*pashm*) sold at Rampur rose from Rs 35,630 in 1837 to Rs 94,432 in 1840.[39] (It, however, declined to Rs 17,766 with the arrival of the British in the western Himalaya.) The statistics for the sale of ordinary wool also show similar trends for it rose from Rs 5,460 in 1831 to Rs 8,971 and thereafter dropped to Rs 387 in 1841.[40] The small commercial establishment set up by the East India Company at Kotgarh to trade in shawl-wool from Kashmir proved fruitful for the Company. The desirability of securing this commodity is expressed by William Lloyd thus:

> The principal mart for shawl wool is Garoo, or Gartope, in Chinese Tartary, from whence it is now brought direct to Koteghur, through Koonawar . . . Two pounds weight of the picked wool costs, upon its arrival here, 8 or 9 rupees or sixteen to eighteen shillings, and this quality is sufficient to make a shawl. It is packed here and sent to England to be manufactured. This material is the produce of a species of goat, and is found under the hair of the animal. It is however but at Ladak and along the banks of the Indus as far as Garoo and the lake Manasarowara that this goat thrives, and its wool is the only staple commodity which company is desirous to obtain from those countries.[41]

Tibetan musk, considered to be of a very high quality in the west, was the most highly prized perfume of the period and was traded directly

'between western Tibet, Muslim Central Asia, via Wakhan and Badakhshan (over the upper Oxus) to Bokhara'.[42] There is enough indication that ghoonts, goats, sheep, tea, dogs and *camara* were exported to the west from Tibet.[43]

A survey of major items of imports and exports in the Indo-Tibetan trade through trans-Himalaya shows that this multilateral trade sustained the traditional economic systems of several kingdoms in the remote and high altitudinal zones of the western Himalaya. Trade sustained several communities of pastoral, agricultural and ecclesiastical nature. People of disparate origins moving across the western Himalaya—either as conquerors, traders or pilgrims—over the centuries brought new ideas and technologies which enriched its already existing mosaic cultures. The monastic art of Tabo is the best example of this cultural mingling.

A low-volume luxury trade affecting the upper class, and the general items of daily consumption in the complex network of trade, were of significant importance in a region where no principality could afford to be completely independent of the other economies immediately surrounding it.

NOTES

1. The position of Lahaul-Spiti district as given in the *District Gazetteer of Lahul and Spiti*, Simla, 1975, p. 2 is not correct. In a recent study, D. Klimburg-Salter has incorrectly called Spiti a district and its position has not been given correctly. *See* her article, 'Tucci Himalayan Archives Report, 2: The 1991 Expedition to Himachal Pradesh', *EW*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1994, p. 19.
2. *Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh: 1992*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Simla, 1993, p. 16.
3. Gondla should not be confused with Ghandhola also known as Tupchiling or Dubchiling situated a little above Tandi.
4. For the location of all villages in Spiti tehsil, *see* Census of India: 1981, *District Census Handbook: Lahul and Spiti District*, Simla, 1982, map vii, facing p. 85.
5. F. Stoliczka, 'Geological Sections Across the Himalayan Mountains, from Wangtu Bridge on the River Sutlej to Sungdo on the Indus, with an Account of the Formations in Spiti, accompanied by a Revision of all known Fossils from that District', *MGSI*, vol. 5, pt 1, 1865, pp. 1–154.
6. H.H. Hayden, 'The Geology of Spiti', *MGSI*, vol. 36, pt 1, 1904, pp. 1–129. *Also see* Thomas Hutton, 'Geological Report on the Valley of the Spiti, and of the Route from Kotghur', *JASB*, vol. X, 1841, pp. 198–229.

7. V. Uhlig, 'The Fauna of the Spiti Shales', *Palaeontologica Indica*, vol. 4, pts 1–3, 1903–10, pp. 395 ff.
8. A. Berthelsen, 'A Geological Section through the Himalaya', *Med dansk geo Foren*, vol. 12, 1951, pp. 102–4.
9. E.H. Pascoe, *A Manual of Geology of India and Burma*, 2 vols, Calcutta, 1950, 1959.
10. D.N. Wadia, *Geology of India*, 3rd ed., London, 1957.
11. W.J. Arkell, *Jurassic Geology of the World*, Edinburg and London, 1956.
12. The results of about one hundred years of research on the geology of Spiti have been admirably summarized by Augusto Gansser, *Geology of the Himalayas*, London, 1964, pp. 68–73.
13. *District Census Handbook: Lahul and Spiti District*, p. 29.
14. For a brief report on the Okhru findings, *see* Laxman S. Thakur, *The Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh: Origin and Development of Temple Styles*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 11.
15. For a thorough study of the sun temple, *see* ibid., pp. 82–4.
16. The titles were assumed by Samudrasena of Nirmand. The title *Śrī mahārāja* was also used by Chaṇḍeśvarahastin of the Sālri inscription. *see* D.C. Sircar and J. Sundaram, 'Sālri Inscription of Chaṇḍeśvarahastin', *EI*, vol. XXXV, 1963, p. 68.
17. Lama Hira Chand was interviewed by the author on 17 June 1992.
18. *See* Laxman S. Thakur, 'A Tibetan Inscription by lHa Bla-ma Ye- shes-'od from dKor (sPu) Rediscovered', *JRAS*, vol. 4, pt 3, 1994, pp. 369–75.
19. George Lloyd, ed., *Narrative of a Journey from Caunpur to the Boorendo Pass in the Himalaya Mountains, via Gwalior, Agra, Delhi, and Sirhind: by Major Sir William Lloyd and Captain Alexander Gerard's account of an attempt to Penetrate by Bekhur to Garoo, and the lake Manasarowara*, 2 vols, London, 1840, vol. II, pp. 275–6.
20. A detailed study on the Rang-rig rtse *dgon-pa* of Tsarang will appear soon. For an early assessment of the antiquities of Tsarang, *see* Laxman S. Thakur, 'An Inscribed Brass Statue of Byams-pa (Maitreya) from Tsa-rang, Kinnaur', *Arts Asiatiques*, vol. XLIX, 1994, pp. 132–3.
21. E. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Aśoka: Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. I, rpt, Delhi, 1969, pp. xi, 27–50.
22. *AI*, no. 9, pp. 140–1, pl. LIX, b and c. *Also see*, T. N. Ramachandran, 'Aśvamedha Site near Kalsi', *JOR*, vol. XXI, pts i–iv, 1951–52, pp. 1–31; 'Aśvamedha Site Inscription near Kalsi: A Note', *JOR*, vol. XXII, pts i–iv, 1952–3, p. 100.
23. Temples and other antiquarian remains of Balag are described in Thakur, *The Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*, pp. 58–9, pls XXXIX–XLIII.
24. Ibid., pp. 46, 50–3, 59–61.
25. Ibid., pp. 78–82.
26. T.G. Montgomerie, 'Report of the Trans-Himalayan Explorations during

1867', *JRGS*, vol. 39, 1869, pp. 146–87; *also see* 'Report of a Route-Survey made by Pundit from Nepal to Lhasa, and thence through the upper valley of the Brahmaputra to its Sources', *JRGS*, vol. 38, 1868, pp. 129–219; map opposite p. 129.

27. Ibid., p. 138.
28. An excellent survey of this route has been carried out by Kenneth Mason in *Routes in the Western Himalaya, Kashmir, etc.* 2nd edn., vol. I, Calcutta, 1929, route 55, pp. 112–15.
29. G.W. Traill, 'Statistical Sketch of Kumaon', *AR*, vol. 16, 1828, pp. 137–225; 'Statistical Report on the Bhotia Mehals of Kumaon', *AR*, vol. 17, 1832, pp. 1–50.
30. An interesting account of iron mines, worked mostly during the cold season in the Chuhara valley of Rohru, has been given by Alexander Gerard, who travelled extensively in Kinnaur and Spiti, in June 1821. *See* George Lloyd, ed., op. cit., pp. 291–2.
31. J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Gupta Kings: Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III, rpt, Varanasi, 1970, no. 80, l. 14 where Kuśalaprakāśa is referred to as the *nihelapati.*
32. A large number of wooden statues preserved in the collections of several monasteries in Kinnaur are made of deodar wood. An abundance of the deodar forests in Kinnaur ensured a constant supply of wood for the monastic establishments in the former kingdoms of Gu-ge and Purang. It is not unlikely that the wood for the portals of the Buddhist monasteries at Tholing and Tsaparang was exported from the Tidang valley, the nearest source in our estimate.
33. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District: Kulu, Lahul and Spiti: 1897*, pts II–IV, Lahore, 1899, pt IV, Spiti, p. 107. Thomas Hutton (*JASB*, vol. IX, 1840, p. 512) also noticed a plant found at Chango whose root was long and grew perpendicularly downwards to some depth. Its outer coat of fibres produced a crimson dye. He adds that 'it is used by the Lamas to stain their images. The Tartars call it "khame".'
34. *Mahābhārata*, vol. II, 48.4.
35. Frederic Schiern, 'The Tradition of the Gold-digging Ants', *IA*, vol. IV, 1875, p. 232.
36. The first survey of these mines was done by the Pandits in 1865–6 and 1867. *See* Montgomerie, 'Report of a Route-Survey made by Pundit . . .', *JRGS*, vol. 38, 1968, pp. 129–219. A very useful map has been prepared by Montgomerie with an inset, showing the gold mines of Thok-Nianmo, Thok-Sarlung and Thok-Jalung. The entire district is known to the Tibetans as the 'gold-country'.
37. For borax and other items of the Tibetan trade with the Himalayan regions of India, *see* Maheshwar P. Joshi and C.W. Brown, 'Some Dynamics of Indo-Tibetan Trade through Uttarākhaṇḍa (Kumaon-Garhwal), India', *JESHO*, vol. XXX, 1987, p. 311. *Also* C.I. Beckwith, 'Tibet and the Early

Medieval *Florissance* in Eurasia: A Preliminary note on the Economic History of the Tibetan Empire, *CAJ*, vol. XXI, 1977, pp. 89–104.

38. D.C. Sircar, in *EI*, vol. XXXI, 1955–6, l. 10, p. 287.
39. See a tabular statement of the export from Tibet to Rampur in J.D. Cunningham, 'Notes on Moorcroft's Travels in Ladakh, and on Gerard's Account of Kunawar, Including a General Description of the latter District', *JASB*, vol. XIII, 1844, p. 210.
40. Ibid.
41. George Lloyd, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 174–5.
42. Beckwith, op. cit., p. 100.
43. Comprehensive details on the items of trade between Kinnaur, Ladakh, Kumaon, Garhwal and Tibet are available in Alexander Gerard's *Account of Koonawur in the Himalaya, etc.*, ed., George Lloyd, London, 1841, pp. 181–5. There are several early nineteenth-century travel accounts in which many fascinating features of trade are found. *See* A. Gerard, 'Narrative of a Journey from Soobathoo to Shipke, in Chinese Tartary', *JASB*, vol. XI, 1842, pp. 363–91; J. D. Herbert, 'An Account of a Tour Made to Lay Down the Course and Levels of the River Setlej or Satudra, as far as Traceable Within the Limits of the British Authority, Performed in 1819', *AR*, vol. 15, 1825, pp. 339–428; James B. Fraser, 'Account of a Journey to the Sources of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers', *AR*, vol. 13, 1818, pp. 171–249; *and also* his *Journal of a Tour through Parts of the Snowy Ranges of the Himala* [sic] *Mountains, and to the Sources of the Rivers Jumna and Ganges*, London, 1820, pp. 301–4, where he has provided the details of the trade route from Sarahan, in Bushahr, to Gartok, in Western Tibet.



II

Historical and Cultural Perspective

The study of the Tabo monastic complex would remain incomplete without an outline of the history of Lahaul-Spiti. The political control of the district by different regional powers considerably influenced the evolution of the Tabo monastery and its artistic trends. The political boundaries of the district continued to fluctuate and remained undemarcated until 1975. The natural boundaries formed by deep gorges and high Himalayan peaks and inaccessible passes did not, in any way, contribute to the emergence of a strong and viable regional kingdom in the trans-Himalayan zone, thus Lahaul and Spiti were controlled by the neighbouring powers with fluctuating fortunes over the centuries.

THE SOURCES

A comprehensive and chronological historical analysis of the district is unsatisfactory given the nature of the sources. I have tried to utilize a variety of archaeological and literary sources for an understanding of the history of this region.

The survival of both Śāradā and Tibetan epigraphic evidence from Lahaul-Spiti, Chamba and Kinnaur is of great importance for we have relied heavily on it for assessing particular regional links with the region. The inscriptions, however, have certain limitations and do not provide the desired information on social, economic and political history, but deal mostly with the dedications of the *lha-khaṅs* (temples), images and *maṇi*-walls. Nevertheless, they constitute an important source for the region's history. Remnants such as rock-carvings, temples, sculptures, murals (on the walls) and wood carvings are equally rewarding for understanding the artistic heritage of Tabo in its wider ramifications.

The epigraphic evidence used in this study comes from places such as Tabo, Dankhar, Lhalung, Horling, Poh (all in Spiti tehsil), Bog, Khangsar, Tandi, Dubchiling, Kardang, Lod, Ghandhola, Biling, Gozang, Triloknath and Margul (all in Lahaul and Udaipur sub-tehsil). Inscriptions from Kinnaur and Chamba are also utilized. Inscriptions examined *in situ* provided the much needed palaeographic and orthographic data for comparison with the wall inscriptions from Tabo discussed in chapter VII.

Chronicles, biographies (*rnam-thars*), paper documents, *mahātmyas* (*dkar-chags*) and the accounts of European travellers are among the literary sources used. It was A.H. Francke who unearthed some chronicles of the chiefs of Kolong and Tinan in Lahaul. The *La-dvags-rgyal-rabs* (the chronicles of Ladakh), the *vaṁśāvalīs* of Chamba and Kulu also provide some information on the history of the region. Of particular interest among the biographical works is that of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po written by his immediate disciple dPal-Ye-śes (Jñānaśrī). Several later versions of this biography appeared subsequently but the original version was in circulation during the time of the 'Gos lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu-dpal (AD 1392–1481), who wrote his monumental work, *Deb-ther sṅon-po*, between AD 1476 and AD 1478.[1] Equally interesting are the biographies of two other Tibetan travellers, namely rGod-tshaṅ-pa (AD 1189–1258) and Urgyan-pa (Orgyan-pa: AD 1230–1309).[2] Both travelled from Western Tibet to Oḍḍiyāna (Afghanistan) via Lahaul-Spiti in the thirteenth century. Further information can be gleaned from the biography of sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa (AD 1574–1651) who passed through Lahaul in AD 1615.[3] For probing the historicity of the local rulers (Jos) of Lahaul mentioned in the chronicles and the inscriptions, I have used with utmost care the documents recovered by Francke from Kolong and Tinan. Fortunately, I was successful in securing some revenue papers from the Patwari's circles both in Spiti and Kinnaur. Such documents are of seminal importance for an in-depth study of the social and economic role that the monastery and the land attached to it played over a period of time.[4]

Enormous amounts of contemporary information are supplied by the accounts of European travellers such as Azevedo (1631),[5] Fraser (1815),[6] A. Gerard (1817–18, 1821),[7] Herbert (1819),[8] Trebeck (1822),[9] Colebrooke (1827),[10] V. Jacquemont (1829–1832,[11] J.G. Gerard (1833),[12] T. Hutton (1838),[13] J.D. Cunningham (1841),[14] Alexander Cunningham (1846–7),[15] Thomas Thomson (1847–8),[16] W. C. Hay (1849)[17] and Egerton (1864).[18] Soon after the British took over the region from the Sikhs in 1846, copious literature appeared on Lahaul-Spiti in the form of land

settlement reports, assessment reports and the gazetteers. Information of a statistical nature compiled in the sources mentioned above on population trends, crop-patterns, prices and wages, agricultural production, land-revenue, trade, livestock and other economic aspects, is significant for future studies. Unfortunately, the early history, art, religion and culture are insufficiently and unscientifically treated. This is so because of the non-utilization of archaeological and Tibetan historical sources. The historical outline of Lahaul and Spiti (the two former Waziris), constructed by Hutchison and Vogel in 1919, and reprinted in 1933,[19] suffers from historical bias but unfortunately has been copied verbatim without further scrutiny by several modern writers, including the compilers of the district gazetteers[20] and the district census handbooks.[21]

HISTORICAL CONSPECTUS

Whether Lahaul-Spiti was included in the empires of the Mauryas, Kuṣāṇas and the Gupta dynasties is still uncertain because of the paucity of literary and epigraphic evidence. The first historical mention of Lahaul is, however, found in Hiuen Tsang's *Si-yu-ki*.[22] The Chinese pilgrim did not visit Lahaul personally which has resulted in the over-estimation of the distance from Kulu to Lahaul (Ko-hu-lo or Lo-u-lo) and Ladakh (Mo-lo-so or San-po-ho).[23]

During the heyday of Tibetan expansion in the eighth and ninth centuries, Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit fell easy victims to the expansion in the west. There exist several petroglyphs inscribed by the Tibetan troops in Ladakh who commanded the frontier posts.[24] One such Tibetan rock inscription has been found at Bharmaur.[25] This is one of the earliest surviving Tibetan inscriptions from Himachal and which A. H. Francke puts between AD 700–900.[26] A single line inscription reads: *khyuṅ-po-jo-nu 'phags-bas(pas)*, 'the august younger prince of the Garuḍa lords'.[27] It is an interesting document from the palaeographic and orthographic points of view. The joining of the *y-btabs* with the base of the initial letter, the use of *na-ro* on the left upper side of the consonants (rather than in the middle) and the *zhabs-kyu* sign fully joined with the lower end of the letter, undeniably suggest that it bears all the characteristics of an early Tibetan palaeography. The presence of this early inscription suggests perhaps that the Budhil valley remained under Tibetan occupation. The Chamba *vaṁśāvalīs* say that the kingdom of Bharmaur was conquered by the Kīras during the reign of Lakṣmīvarman, and his successor, Muṣāṇvarman, freed it from them.[28] Who were the Kīras

referred to in the *vaṁśāvalīs*? Could they be associated with the people of Kīragrāma (Baijnath)? They are mentioned along with Durgara, Saumaṭikas and Kashmiras in the Kulait copperplate inscription of Somavarman,[29] and the Chamba copperplate inscription of Somavarman and Āṣaṭa.[30] The people of Trigarta (Kangra) and Kulu are mentioned separately in the same inscriptions, thus Kīras here cannot be associated with the people of Trigarta. An early attack on the capital city of Bharmaur recorded in the *vaṁśāvalīs* seems to have been made by the Tibetans whose kings assumed the title, *khri* 'throne'. The penetration in the Budhil valley was possible from Lahaul between AD 750 and AD 815 when the Tibetan empire saw its maximum western expansion. Soon after Muṣāṇavarman freed his kingdom from the Kīras and re-established his hegemony over the region.

The history of Spiti remains shrouded in mystery because no evidence has survived from early times. The attribution of a Nirmand copperplate, issued by a *mahāsāmanta* and a *mahārāja* Samudrasena, to a Spiti ruler is totally untenable. The view was first expressed by Hutchison and Vogel in 1919, and repeated without any scrutiny in 1933.[31] The copperplate grant is dated in the Harṣa era, that is, AD 612–13. R.S. Tripathi has convincingly argued that Kulūtas, Sthāṇvīśvara, Mathurā, Śatadru and Śrughna, the dominions described by Hiuen Tsang, were under Harṣa's control.[32] The Nirmand copperplate mentions the names of Samudrasena's predecessors starting from Varuṇasena, Saṁjyasena and Raviṣeṇa. Not one of them is claimed to be a ruler of Spiti in any source including the *vaṁśāvalīs*. The principality of Samudrasena, with its headquarters at Nirmand, included the areas along the Sutlej river. Spiti was not controlled by Samudrasena nor could it have been controlled by Kulu in the beginning of the seventh century AD. Thus the Nirmand copperplate does not belong to any Spiti ruler as mentioned by Hutchison and Vogel.

There exists no definite epigraphic and literary evidence regarding the historical background of Lahaul-Spiti till the second half of the tenth century when it became associated with the history of the mṄa'-ris skor-gsum (the circle of the three royal domains). The question which needs investigation is whether Lahaul, or Spiti, or both, formed parts of the mṄa'-ris skor-gsum. Most of the Tibetan sources are unanimous in naming the three units of Ñi-ma-mgon's empire divided amongst the three sons after his death. lPal-gyi-mgon received Mar-yul (Mar-luṅs, Maṅ-yul), bKra-śis-mgon got Purang (Pu-raṅ, Pu-raṅs, sPu-hraṅs and sPu-raṅs). 'Phags-pa, the Ṅor and the Ladakhi chronicles have added

Gu-ge and Ya-tshe (Ya-rtse or Ya-tse) with Purang.[33] The third son, lDe-gtsug-mgon was given Zhaṅ-zhuṅ. The *La-dvags rgyal-rabs*, compiled in the middle of the seventeenth century, for the first time, mentions Zangskar, Spiti and Spi-lcogs as possessions of lDe-gtsug-mgon (*chuṅ-ba lde-gtsug-mgon la zaṅs-dkar sgo-gsum spi-ti spi-lcogs daṅ bcas-pa la mṅa' mdzad*||).[34] On sPi-ti and sPi-lcogs, Zahiruddin Ahmad has remarked that they 'are, probably, not two separate territories, but parts of the same territory, *-ti* and -lcogs being adjectives qualifying the name of the territory, *sPi-*. Possibly, the meanings are "the lowlands of sPi" and "the highlands of sPi", respectively'.[35] The fifty-four-line wall inscription from Lhalung, however, resolves the controversy of the identification of the sPi-lcogs. It is used for the Spiti valley and has nothing to do with Gar-zha (Lahaul).[36] The inclusion of Zangskar and Spiti as possessions of lDe-gtsug-mgon seems to be an imaginative creation by the compiler of the chronicles of Ladakh because no earlier Tibetan source has mentioned them.

The successors of lDe-gtsug-mgon became famous for the 'second diffusion' of Buddhism in Western Tibet. It seems very likely that the kingdoms of bKra-śis-mgon and lDe-gtsug-mgon were united by the third quarter of the tenth century and ruled subsequently by Sroṅ-ṅe or 'Khor-re. The Tibetan sources are not agreed on the identification of the king who was ordained and adopted the religious life, along with his two sons, Nā-ga-rā-dza and De-ba-rā-dza. He became famous by assuming the religious name lHa-Bla-ma Ye-śes-'od (*gurudeva Jñānaprabha*).[37] This name is fully preserved on two inscriptions at Pooh and Tabo, respectively. In any case, whether he was Sroṅ-ṅe or 'Khor-re, is not clear, but Nā-ga-rā-dza and De-ba-rā-dza were sons of the king who when ordained took the name of Ye-śes-'od. The trio is depicted in a mural at Tabo.[38]

Lahaul-Spiti, by virtue of being situated between the kingdoms of Ladakh, Chamba, Kulu, Bushahr and Gu-ge, could never attain complete independence as the records after the tenth century indicate.

The chronicles of Ladakh inform us that Lha-chen Utpala (AD 1080–1110) invaded Kulu (Ñuṅ-ti) and forced its king to agree to pay tribute forever.[39] The items of tribute included *mdzo* and iron (*mdzo daṅ lcags la sogs*). Since there were no *mdzos* in Kulu, it seems quite possible that the *mdzos* were supplied from Lahaul to Ladakh, since the former was under Kulu. Utpala expanded his empire in all directions, even as far as Purang, therefore the likelihood of his hegemony over Kulu and Lahaul seems feasible. From the last decade of the eleventh century parts of

Lahaul such as Churah and Pangi, including the Pattan valley, became an integral part of the Chamba kingdom under Somavarman (AD 1060–80), Āṣaṭavarman (AD 1080–1105 or 6) and Lalitavarman (AD 1143–75).[40] The *rājās* of Balor (Vallāpura) regained possession of Churah for some years in the twelfth century, otherwise the entire Pattan valley remained under Chamba until 1948. Several inscriptions issued by the Chamba rulers have been found from places such as Luj, Loh-Tikri, Salhi, Sai, Devi-ri-kothi and Triloknath. The extant monuments found in the Pattan valley fully corroborate Chamba's dominance over it.

It is indeed not clear whether Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (AD 1420–70) of Kashmir, who personally led an expedition against Western Tibet (Goggadesa) and Ladakh, ever invaded Kulu or Lahaul. Jonarāja's *Rājataraṅgiṇī* tells us that 'Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir . . . invades Goggadesa . . . , saves a golden image of Buddha from the hands of the Yavanas . . . in Śaya-deśa, and takes the town of Kulūta (Kulu), which apparently was occupied by the Tibetans'.[41] The chronicles of Kulu and Ladakh are silent on this raid. Whether Kulu was actually occupied by the Tibetans (or possibly by Ladakhis) remains, however, inconclusive. What can be construed from the accounts of the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* is that after sacking the capital city of Sheh in Ladakh, Zain-ul-Abidin's soldiers may have penetrated the valley of Bhaga, and possibly Chandra, which were by now under Kulu's control. Very little is known about the history of Spiti during this period.

bKra-śis rnam-rgyal (AD 1555–75) has been praised in the Alchi inscription for bringing into subjection the valley people (Mon) and the Mongols (Hor), and conquering regions such as Ruthog, Spiti, Suru, Dras, Nubra, Zangskar and the mṄa'-ris.[42] The position seems to have been further consolidated by his successor Tshe-dbaṅ rnam-rgyal (AD 1575–95). It is not clear whether Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal ever controlled Lahaul, but the Ladakhi kingdom had attained its largest extent under his reign. The chronicles make him the master of the geographical tract extending from Zoji-la in the west to Maryum-la in the east. Apart from controlling Ladakh, Nubra and Dras, he was the uncontested master of Zangskar, Spiti, Purang, Ruthog and Gu-ge proper.[43] The conquest of Gu-ge by Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal is also attested by the Jesuit traveller Father de Andrade in his letter written in AD 1633.[44] Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal assigned the control of Zangskar and Spiti to his son dDe-mchog rnam-rgyal. While Spiti remained uninterruptedly under Ladakhi rulers from 1630 to 1684, Lahaul, remained under Kulu's dominance from the time

of Bahādur Singh (AD 1532–59) until it was taken over by the Sikhs in 1840, along with Kulu.

A.H. Francke copied an important inscription from Khangsar engraved on a stone placed at the *stūpa* (*mchod-rten*). It mentions the name of the Kulu king Parbat Singh (*lha-sras chos-rgyal par-bad siṅ-ga*).[45] His capital city is called a 'great royal palace of Ma-gar-saṅ'[46] (Magarsa). Tshe-dbaṅ rnam-rgyal is mentioned twice, and it seems possible that he was responsible for causing this inscription to be engraved. Two persons are called *rgyal-pos* (*rājās*). They include bDe-'Zam of Kye-laṅ-mkhar (the fort of Keylong) and Tshe-rin pal-lde of Śi-la-mkhar (the fort of Shila).[47] The names of two queens are also recorded: *rgyal-mo* Naṅ-gha dpal-mo and *rgyal-mo* 'Dzom. What becomes clear from the inscription is that different *rgyal-pos* of Lahaul had accepted the suzerainty of Kulu and such a situation remained unchanged in the subsequent centuries. A Portuguese traveller Azevedo, who passed through Lahaul in AD 1631, clearly states that Carjā (Gar-zha) was under Kulu.[48]

The Tibet-Ladakhi-Mughal war of AD 1679–84 did not change the political setting of Lahaul. However, it seems quite likely that Kulu further consolidated its hold over upper Lahaul (sTod) during the reign of Bidhi Singh (AD 1672–88). The war proved disastrous for Ladakh because it had to sign two humilating treaties with Tibet and Kashmir. As a consequence of the Tibetan victory against Ladakhis, dGa'-ldan tshe-dbaṅ, on 21 July 1684, announced officially to the Paṇ-chen the annexation of mṄa'-ris. A supplement added to the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama by Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho gives an interesting account regarding the administration of a few localities in mNa'-ris:

> On the day [i.e. 23 May 1685] of the new moon, I [Saṅs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho] gave appropriate farewell-presents and bade farewell to (a) Tshe-brtan rDo-rje of Khaṅ-dmar (who was now appointed) rDzoṅ-sdod [= rDoṅ-dpon] of rTsa-hraṅ in Gu-ge [which was, formerly, a part of Maṅ-yul (i.e. Mar-yul, i.e. Ladakh)]; (b) Blo-bzaṅ Don-yod [who was now appointed] to sTag-la-mkhar; and (c) Thaṅ-Groṅ-pa [who was now appointed] to [s]Pi-ti.[49]

All places mentioned above are easily identifiable. The name of Thaṅ-groṅ-pa, the prefect of Spiti, appointed by the Lhasa authority, has so far not been noticed on inscriptions. He was replaced in AD 1687. In this connection Petech has remarked that 'the post (of *rdzoṅ-sdod*) apparently lapsed, and Spiti returned under the loose suzerainty of Ladakh, although Lhasa maintained some influence in the valley'.[50]

A group of inscriptions belonging to the reign of, Ñi-ma rnam-rgyal

(AD 1694–1729) has been discovered by Tucci from mKhar-rtse (Kaza) in Spiti. Perhaps it was during his reign that Spiti passed from Central Tibetan control to Ladakh, as described in the gazetteer, thus:

> . . . it was incorporated in the Guge principality, which lay to the east, in what is now Chinese Tibet, and was not restored to Ladakh till about 1720, when King of Ladakh, at the conclusion of the war with Guge and Lhasa, married the daughter of the Lhasa commander, and took Spiti as her dowry.[51]

The biography of the Fifth Dalai Lama compiled by Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho informs us that the Ladakhi king, Ñi-ma rnam-rgyal married a woman belonging to a noble family of Central Tibet in AD 1694. Her name was bSod-nams rGyal-mo also mentioned in several Ladakhi documents.[52] If at all the Ladakhi king received Spiti in dowry then the transfer of Spiti from Tibetan control to Ladakh might have taken place at the close of the seventeenth century.

The chronicles of the chiefs of Kolong repeatedly claim that 'Raja Man Singh (AD 1688–1719) through the decline in power of the Tibetan Raja (Ladakh) became ruler of Lahaul'.[53] The names of the two families of Kolong have been preserved in the Kolong chronicles down to the time of Amar Chand who succeeded Hari Chand in 1900. It is generally believed that the Gondla castle was constructed during the reign of Man Singh who married a daughter of the Thakur family of Gondla. Harcourt has in person seen an inscription in Nāgarī characters inscribed on a beam in one apartment of the castle. He, however, admitted that the inscription was so defaced by age and smoke that no reading was possible.[54] Man Singh is said to have invaded Spiti and compelled its people to pay tribute.

No inscription of Tedhi Singh (AD 1742–67) has been found in Lahaul, but the names of his two successors Pritam Singh (AD 1767–1806) and Bikram Singh (AD 1806–16) have been found on three *maṇi*-wall inscriptions from Khangsar and Bog respectively. Pritam Singh (*spri-tim siṅ-ge*) is called the ruler of Sur-stan-spur (Sultanpur).[55] An inscription from Bog is perhaps the last document of the Kulu rulers from Lahaul.[56] It informs us that Bikram Singh (*bhir-khyim seṅ-ge*) had a great royal palace at Sur-tan-pu-ri (Sultanpur). His contemporary in Lahaul was Dharma Singh (*dharmā seṅ-ge*) who is called *me-dbaṅ chen-po* in another inscription. Dharma Singh was the chief of Kolong when Moorcroft passed through Lahaul in 1820.

Spiti continued to be under the jurisdiction of Ladakh as the Wamle *'chiṅ-yig* (award) in its first article says that 'Khar-bu and Spiti (sPyi-ti)

not to be given to bKra-śis rnam-rgyal'[57] in addition to Purig as decided before. Spiti was under bKra-śis rnam-rgyal until his death in AD 1758. He died without an heir and then his kingdom was united with Ladakh. It seems that Ladakhi control over Spiti was nominal. However, it continued to send yearly tribute to Leh. Alexander Gerard in his notes, written in 1821, remarked that about fifty-five years ago Dankhar was possessed by the Bushahris who kept it for two years.[58] This may correspond to AD 1766. It seems to be a mere raid of temporary nature without any territorial acquisition. Similar raids were made on Spiti by Kulu. Trebeck who was in Spiti between 19 June and 27 August 1822, added: '. . . more than a year since, a large armed body of the Kulu peasantry, headed by a near connection of Sobha Ram, entered Piti by the Losar pass . . . , took possession of everything . . . They advanced no further than Rerik (Rangrik), and destroyed several houses by lighting large fires in the room. The Gonpa of Kih was much injured.'[59] This happened in 1821, not in 1819, as recorded in the *Gazetteer of Lahul and Spiti*. Fortunately, Tabo escaped from the destruction but suffered the most in the following decade when the armies of the Dogras (1835 9) and the Sikhs (1840–1) plundered every village and its monastery.

The fortunes of Lahaul-Spiti during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century revolve around the rise and fall of two powers in north-western India—the Dogras and the Sikhs. The Dogra conquest of Ladakh brought the age-old kingdom to a state of shambles between 1835 and 1839.[60] Spiti could not escape the cruelties of the Dogra army led by Zorawar Singh. The paper inscription pasted on the northern wall in the 'Du-khaṅ at Tabo briefly refers to the destruction of the monastery in 1837 (fire-bird year), and subsequent repairs carried out by the monks in the following year (earth-dog year).[61] Zorawar Singh's name is not mentioned in the inscription, but mention is made of *seṅ-gi dmag*, which when translated means 'the army of the Sikhs', although it was actually the army of the Dogras. In 1837, Ladakh was under the control of the Dogras. After the defeat of Zorawar Singh at the hands of the Tibetans, the Sikh army forced Kulu to subjection in 1841 and sent up a force to plunder Spiti. The local inhabitants retreated into the highlands and left their houses and monasteries to be ransacked and set on fire. The Lahore Durbar, however, did not attempt to annex the country to Kulu nor even separate it from Ladakh.

After the Treaty of Lahore between the British and the Sikhs (9 March 1846), and the Treaty of Amritsar between the British and the Dogras (16 March 1846), Lahaul and Spiti came securely within the

jurisdiction of the British-Indian administration. Article I of the Treaty of Amritsar specifically laid down that the British Government 'transfers and makes over for ever in independent possession "to the Jammu Raja" all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the river Indus and the westward of the river Ravi'.[62] The territory of Lahaul is excluded from the operation of this clause. The British Government with the object of securing a road to the wool region of Chang Thang, which is close to Spiti, added Spiti to Kulu, and gave the Jammu ruler some other territory. Later Alexander Cunningham and Vans Agnew spent the summer of 1846 demarcating the boundaries of Lahaul and Spiti, and in 1849 both regions were placed under the direct control of the Assistant Commissioner of Kulu, Major William Hay.

Before a regular settlement of Lahaul-Spiti was undertaken by G. C. Barnes in 1849, Lahaul Waziri paid to the Sikhs a sum of Rs 5,000 as an annual revenue.[63] Spiti paid to Ladakh, from 1839 to 1843, a sum of Rs 2000, two *ghoonts* (ponies) and 25 sheep.[64] From 1843 to 1846 it was reduced to a sum of Rs 1031. Besides this amount, Spiti supplied 60 sheep, instead of 25, and 100 iron crow-bars. William Hay's account has added two *ghoonts* and a *nazarānā* of Rs 15 in addition to articles mentioned above.[65] The summary settlement of Spiti made by Vans Agnew in 1846 was settled at Rs 753 per annum and the revenue for the years 1847–9 was paid to Mansukh Das, the Wazir of Bushahr.[66] Later Barnes fixed the revenue of Lahaul at Rs 2150, and Spiti at Rs 753. This assessment remained in operation until 1879. The revision of the settlement was taken up by James Lyall in 1865. The main purpose of this settlement was to prepare an accurate record of rights and collect exact statistics of cultivation and resources. Several discrepancies were brought to the notice of the British administration by Lyall, and the revenue settlement of both Waziris was changed frequently on one or the other pretext until 1952.[67]

Each Waziri had under its control a number of *koṭhīs*—14 *koṭhīs* in Lahaul and 5 in Spiti. The post of the Wazir or Negi or Nono was abolished in 1941 and a Naib-Tehsildar was made responsible for all administration. In 1960 the area was reorganized into a district with two sub-divisions at Kaza and Keylong. In the same year the Government of India constituted a commission under the Chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar to recommend the Scheduled areas of Lahaul and Spiti.[68] On 1 November 1966, the hill areas of the Panjab were transferred to Himachal Pradesh and Lahaul-Spiti became a separate district. The

boundaries of the district were laid down in 1975 when 118 villages of Pangi sub-tehsil of Chamba district were transferred to Lahaul tehsil, and in 1980, when Udaipur sub-division was carved out of the Lahaul tehsil.

The brief historical sketch outlined above makes it amply clear that Lahaul-Spiti, which constitutes a single district today, never remained one political entity. No neighbouring power could control it completely until the British took over Lahaul and Spiti in 1846 and further divided it into two Waziris of the Kulu sub-division of Kangra district. The interaction between rulers, warriors, traders, missionaries, scholars and pilgrims brought contrasting cultural influences from distant lands. The Tabo monastery provides keys to such cultural influences as are visible in the architecture, sculpture, iconography, palaeography and mural paintings. It is equally important to examine the nature of western Himalayan Buddhism and its interaction with other religious systems which provided stimulus to both art and architecture.

BONPOS: PRE-BUDDHIST RELIGION OF SPITI

Before understanding western-Himalayan Buddhism and its complex structure we will briefly describe the pre-Buddhist religious system, particularly the Bonpos. Prior to the introduction of Buddhism in Lahaul-Spiti, there were at least two systems of beliefs operating simultaneously: Bonpos and the popular folk religion. Folk gods and goddesses popularly known as *sa-bdag, bzhi-bdag, yul-lha* and *klu-lha* are worshipped even today despite the uninterrupted prevalence of Buddhism in the valley from the tenth century onwards. The Bon religion, however, died out completely, because the practices of the Bonpos paved the way for the speedy expansion of Buddhism in the valley. There is archaeological evidence of the presence of the Bonpos in Spiti and the adjoining area of Ladakh. Over one hundred petroglyphs have been noticed in Tabo alone, two dozen in Lari and a few specimens in the Kunzam pass. A long row of almost-ruined *stūpas* (*mchod-rten*) found in front of the Tabo monastery, to my estimate, belong to the Bonpos because numerous rock-carvings are scattered on either side of the *stūpas*. The rock-carvings can easily be attributed to the Bonpo community on the following grounds:

(i) no Buddhist symbols appear among a variety of incised drawings on rocks;

(ii) the peculiar absence of a Buddhist *stūpa*, so commonly carved on rocks, is significant;

(iii) several objects, carved so minutely, constitute a definite scheme of the Bonpo ritualistic system; and

(iv) these carvings are almost equally divided into two halves (Pl. I) on either sides of the *stūpas* (Pl. II) in an area of about 14 hectares (7 hectare, under the possession of Dr Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry (Solan); and the remaining 7 hectares has been fenced by the Forest Department).[69]

Analysing the typology and frequency of symbols incised on the rocks from Tabo, Lari and Kunzam and comparing these with similar rock-carvings from Ladakh might help us to suggest a period of their execution, even if tentatively.

It appears quite likely that the uneven rocky portion was flattened by tools to prepare a smooth surface for the symbols and devices to be carved on it (Pl. III) . Some rocks are highly polished and overlaid by a thin glazed encrustation of a dark brown or reddish colour, which protected the rock against the icy winds. These carvings are produced by removing and cutting this glazed portion. Broadly I classify them into seven types (Fig. 2):

(i) animal figures that appear quite frequently are those of the ibex, wild goat, horse, blue sheep, snow leopard, yak and elephant;

(ii) men, mostly standing, and a horse-rider from Kunzam which is especially remarkable;

(iii) birds, however, remain to be identified conclusively;

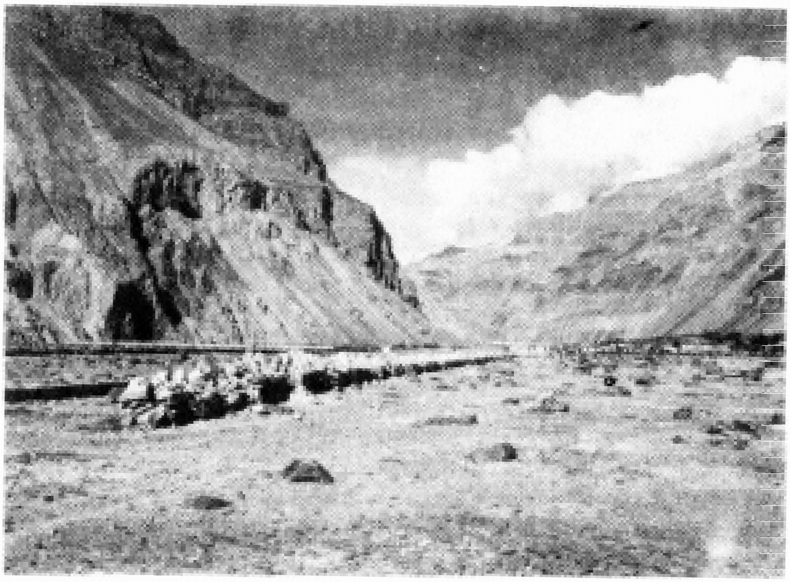
(iv) trees—*shugpa* (*Juniperus macropoda*)—the holy tree of the Bonpos;

(v) symbols showing reversed *svāstika*, sun (with five, seven and eleven spokes), moon, altar (*lha-tho*), *nandipada*, circles either separately or in a chain, magic square, triangle, cross and magical diagrams;

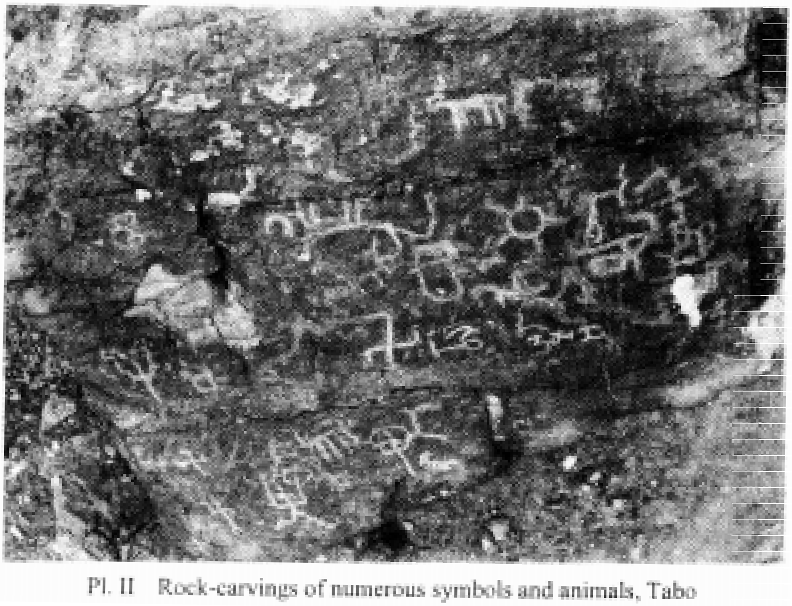
(vi) three kinds of structures: (a) a sacrificial stand; (b) a *stūpa* capped by a trident showing two prongs moving in either direction; some *stūpas* are simple and go up to nine stages possibly representing the pyramid of nine *svāstikas* (*gyuṅ-drug dgu-brtsegs*); and (c) crossed *stūpa*;

(vii) scenes of actions representing a hunter, and a man dragging an animal towards an altar, possibly for slaughtering.

Artistically these carvings show two, or rather three, phases. The first style appears quite primitive but not motionless. An onlooker can easily



Pl. I View of a row of Bonpo *stūpas* and numerous rock-carvings in the adjoining areas



Pl. II Rock-carvings of numerous symbols and animals, Tabo



Pl. III Pyramid of nine *svāstikas* depicted in the rock-carvings, Tabo

comprehend what a particular figure represents. No scale or symmetry has been maintained as some limbs of the body are carved out of proportion. In the second style, the figures are in full motion, particularly an ibex shown in fleeing motion. The third style represents some lively actions: a man takes a wild goat or an ibex to the sacrificial altar.

It is quite clear from the carvings that they have no connections with Buddhism. Similar carvings have been discovered from Ladakh by Francke[70] and Tucci.[71] Many symbols in them such as birds, trees and animals are common. Two major differences can be noticed here. No Buddhist *stūpa* appears on the Spiti graffiti. Secondly, only a few are inscribed. The peculiar absence of a *stūpa* makes it clear that these carvings belong to the non-Buddhist traditions and were carved much before the penetration of the Buddhist culture into the Spiti valley. They represent a totemistic cult associated with autochthonous beliefs of the people of Lahaul-Spiti. Possibly these carvings were done on special occasions such as birth celebrations, funeral rites, occult and oracular feasts and the like.

Tabo was a centre of the Bonpo religion prior to the introduction of Buddhism in Spiti. Bon religion was predominant in the area of Zhaṅ-zhuṅ prior to the western movement of Tibetan culture and language. The

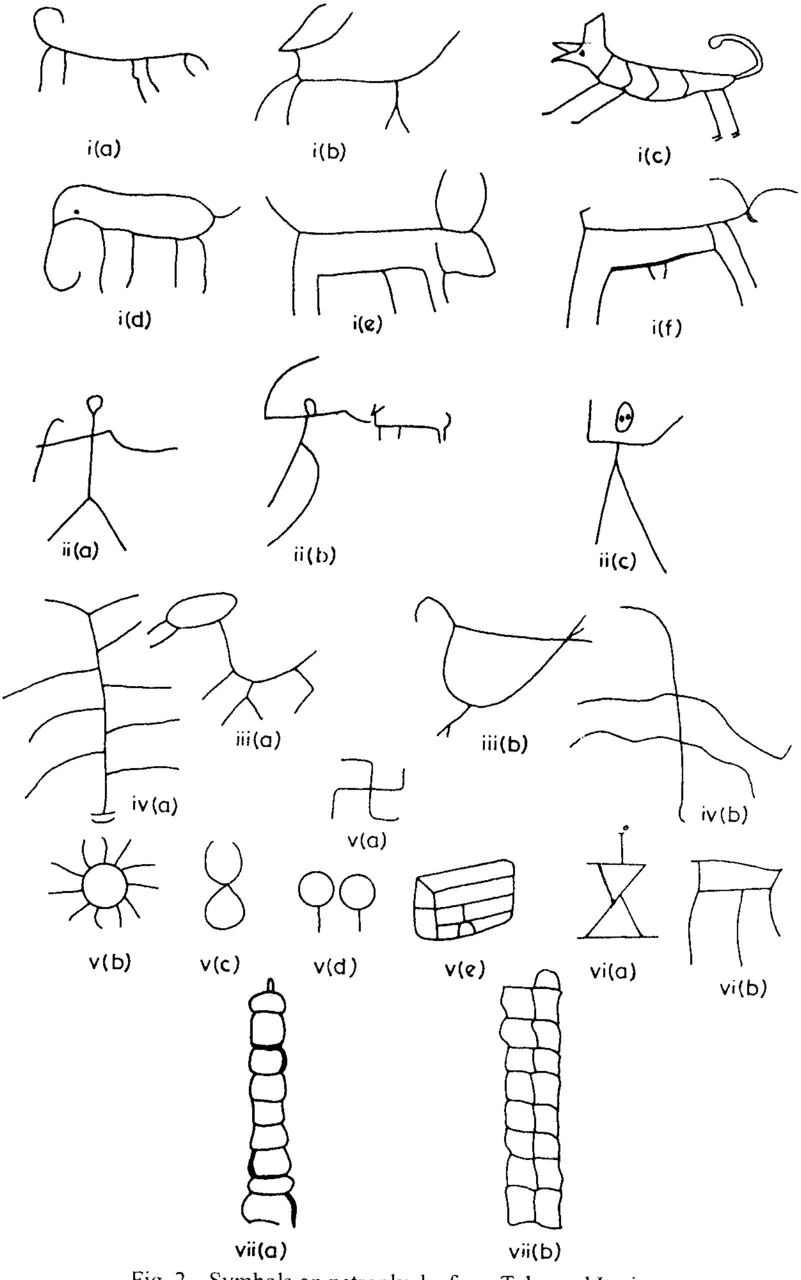


Fig. 2 Symbols on petroglyphs from Tabo and Lari

The capital of Zhaṅ-zhuṅ was a place called Khyuṅ-luṅ dṅul-mkhar, 'the Silver Palace of the Garuḍa Valley' situated in the upper Sutlej valley to the south-west of Mount Kailāśa visited by Tucci in 1933.[72] Extensive field explorations carried out in Tabo and Lari indicate that a few petroglyphs contain some inscriptions which are written in archaic Tibetan *dbu-can* and *dbu-med* scripts.[73] Is it possible that these inscriptions represent the earliest forms of the Tibetan characters in the Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh? If such a supposition is accepted then the rock-carvings from the Spiti valley could provide clues to the style of writing that was known to the Zhaṅ-zhuṅ people before the introduction of a comprehensive grammar and language by Thon-mi Sambhoṭa in the seventh century AD. The prevalence of these carvings is significant for understanding Tabo's pre-Buddhist status and its conversion to Buddhism during the 'second diffusion'. Rin-chen bzaṅ-po selected only those places for establishing the gTsug-lag-khaṅs in the three mṄa'-ris which were either the centres of Bonpo faith or the local gods. Some local gods were made the guardians of the newly-established Buddhist monasteries by him to ensure the amalgamation of local faiths with Buddhism. The protectress of Tabo, Wi-ñu-myin, seems to be a Zhaṅ-zhuṅ[74] name, and she was given a prominent place in a mural over the entrance of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

PHASES OF BUDDHIST EXPANSION IN HIMACHAL (with special reference to Lahaul-Spiti)

There were two distinct phases of Buddhist expansion in Himachal Pradesh. The archaeological findings suggest that there is no evidence of Buddhism in Lahaul-Spiti prior to eighth century AD. A look at the map (Fig. 3) makes it clear that Buddhism was flourishing in other parts of Himachal. This is also supported by inscriptions, sculptures and structural remains. When Buddhism suffered major reverses in Kangra, Kulu, Sirmaur and other areas, Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, however, witnessed tremendous progress and reached a climax during the late tenth through twelfth centuries. The entire trans-Himalayan region became a cradle of Buddhism during the 'second diffusion' under the patronage of Gu-ge kings.

So far no Aśokan Buddhist remains have been discovered in Himachal. However, a set of fourteen major rock edicts inscribed at Kalsi[75] in Dehradun district near Paonta Sahib could indicate that Himachal did not remain unaffected by the massive Buddhist activity during Aśoka's reign. Evidence of Buddhist penetration in Kangra

comes from Kanihara (Khanyārā) from bilingual inscriptions, dating back to the second century AD, in Kharoṣṭhī (75 cm by 48 cm) and Brāhmī (128 cm by 53 cm) which record the construction of an *ārāma*.[76] *Ārāma*, one of the Buddhist settlements, was quite common in different parts of India. The construction of a Buddhist monastery at Kanihara by Kṛṣṇayaśa indicates that the place was known for some commercial activity. It seems quite possible that the slates of Kanihara were in great demand in the neighbouring areas. Kṛṣṇayaśa seems to be either a merchant or a local chief who not only supported a Buddhist establishment, a little away from Kanihara village, but perhaps also donated some land in the vicinity of the inscription for its sustenance. The engraving of two symbols—*nandipada* and *svāstika*—at the end of the second line is significant because similar symbols are to be seen on another rock inscription at Pathiar (Paṭhyār). The first line of the inscription in Brāhmī reads *Vāyulasa pukariṇi*, 'Vayula's lotus-pond'. The Kharoṣṭhī version adds *rāthitarasa* followed by the text. Two symbols engraved on these inscriptions were used by tribal people on their coins, thus the association of Pathiar inscription with Buddhism cannot be taken for granted. For example, the coins of the Kulūtas, Kuṇindas, Mālavas, Yaudheyas and Vṛṣṇis have shown both *svāstika* and *nandipada*.[77] Scholars are agreed that Vṛṣṇis were worshippers of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva. The Yaudheyas' presiding deity was Skanda Kārttikeya; the Audumbaras were Śaivite. The two symbols mentioned above were adopted by several tribal people to be used on their coins and therefore their Buddhist association alone cannot be accepted. The Kanihara inscription, in addition to these symbols, specifically refers to an *ārāma*, thus its Buddhist association seems confirmed.

Another interesting object with Buddhist affiliation is a copper vase (*loṭā*) from Kundlah (Kulu).[78] There is a little problem regarding the exact location of Kundlah in Kulu. Two places of similar typonomy exist in Lahaul—Gondla where stands a famous castle of the Jos of Tinan, and Ghandhola situated at the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers near Tandi. Major William Hay procured the vase in 1857 and handed it over to Charles Horne for a detailed study. It is slightly broken and perhaps pieces were taken for chemical analysis as Horne added that 'General Cunningham had broken off portions for analysis, the reports of the result of which I have not been able to obtain'.[79] I am not discussing its artistic value because several competant authorities have already described it at considerable length.[80] What is important is that this *loṭā* had been used by a wandering ascetic on his pilgrimage either

to Guru Ghantal monastery (Ghandhola) or to Triloknath. There seems to have been a temporary shelter near the confluence of two rivers, below the Guru Ghantal monastery, from where two roads branched off in two different directions, the Pattan and the Bhaga valleys. It is definitely not an object manufactured in Lahaul (which produced a crude quality of iron) as the metal used in its production is very pure and has resisted corrosions for several centuries. The exact theme of the procession engraved on it remains yet to be identified but such processions have been carved on the stone reliefs at Sanchi, Bharhut and Bhaja. The use of rope stirrup in the engraving is significant. Such stirrups made of metal or cotton yarn or leather were first introduced in Rome around the second century AD and were rarely depicted in the Sanchi or Bharhut reliefs. The frequent use of stirrups in this *loṭā* may further bring down the manufacturing date to third century AD.

A three-line Kali Pathari inscription from Parwanoo, however, remains to be deciphered conclusively but preliminary readings show that it 'expresses a view of life which advocates for efforts to sever connections with world attachments'. This is a Buddhist viewpoint as advocated in the *Dhammapada*. The inscription can safely be dated to the second or third century AD because it is written in a mixture of Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī. The two other inscriptions from Pathiar and Kanihara are also written in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī expressing similar ideas though not in mixed scripts. This is the first and only inscription from Himachal and the third from the north-west to use both scripts.[81] The mixed scripts were used by traders coming back from Vaṅga (West Bengal and Bangladesh) during the Kusāṇa period.[82]

Several sculptures dated between the mid-sixth and seventh centuries have been found in Kangra within a radius of about 20 km. The Kanihara, Chetru and Pathiar-Lakhamandal triangle seems to be significant from the Buddhist point of view. A Buddhist *stūpa* from Chetru brought to light by Vogel in 1906 is popularly associated with Bhīma of the *Mahābhārata*.[83] It measures 830 feet in circumference. Recently Buddha's foot-prints were noticed carved on a stone measuring 22 cm by 12 cm by 6 cm. A few burnt bricks measuring 23 cm by 18 cm by 8 cm which have been discussed here have the same proportions as those at Lakhamandal. F. Farley discovered two Buddhist stone statues at the same site while cutting through the south-eastern portion of the mound for the new road from Kangra to Dharamsala. According to J.Ph. Vogel one of the statues was placed in the Lahore Museum while the other was set up near the site.[84] The latter statue still stands in a small shrine

in the adjoining litchi garden, known as Rāni Kā Bāg, and is worshipped as Draupadī. It measures 127 cm in height and has remained unfinished. A close look at the head reveals the presence of curls. The female figures on either side are beautifully carved. The description of the Buddha's head, deposited in the Lahore Museum, is given by Vogel. It shows Indian characteristics with 'long drawn eyes, a broad rather flat nose and heavy lips'.[85] The presence of *uṣṇīṣa* and a forehead mark *ūrṇā* makes it possible to reconstruct the appearance of two other headless Buddha's from Lakhamandal discussed below.

Perhaps contemporaneous with the Buddhist sculptures from Chetru described above is an inscribed stone pedestal noticed by Cunningham from Chahri which is a stone's throw from Lakhamandal. The pedestal is now untraceable but its engravings, published by Cunningham, indicate that it may have enshrined a Vajravārāhī.[86] At Chahri two Buddhist, one Jain and one Vaiṣṇava stone sculptures have been found. On the dilapidated ruins of Lakhamandal, Rodgers has given an interesting account:

> Ruins of a temple which was once built of large bricks and stone. The bricks were taken away to make a bridge over the Baner, several stone idols are still lying about the mound. The style of sculpture displayed in these indicate great age . . . The mound is now a heap of earth and brick ends. A small temple has been made by the villagers out of broken images and bricks. In front of this is a fluted pillar standing in the ground without either capital or base. Lakha Mandar is now a ransacked ruin.[87]

The entire site awaits the archaeologist's spade. The surface-level findings indicate that Lakhamandal was a site of composite culture where Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanist lived together. Several bricks at the site and their correspondence to the size of the bricks at Chetru, measuring 23 cm by 17 cm by 8 cm, were noted.

Two headless Buddhas from the site deserve notice. The larger one measuring 86 cm by 72 cm is now in the Museum of Kangra Art, and the smaller statue measuring 41.5 cm by 36 cm (Acc. No. 82.136) is in the State Museum, Simla. Both are shown in sitting positions with *bhūmisparśamudrā*. Below the lotus *āsanas* appear kneeling devotees with folded hands. Stylistically, both statues belong to the seventh century AD and this is corroborated by the fact that along with these sculptures has been found an inscribed Jain statue with the proto-Śāradā characters of the seventh century.[88]

An inscribed brass Buddha which was bought by Hirānanda for a

sum of Rs 80 at Fatehpur has been dated to the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century.[89] It shows Buddha in *dharmacakra-mudrā*. The depiction of a lion throne on the front and at the back is interesting, for such a throne is frequently shown with Vairocana and Amitābha in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. The corner-pillars on either side of the lions and U-shaped folds of the drapery are typical of the Gandhara art. The two-line inscription in Sanskrit records the names of two Buddhist *bhikṣus* namely Dharmapriya and Dharmasiṁha together with their *ācārya* Dharmasiṁha. The inscription ends with the dictum, *sārdhaṁ sarvasatva* (*ttvaiḥ*) 'with all sentient beings'.[90]

An analysis of the Buddhist artefacts would remain incomplete unless a few comments are made on a stone Avalokiteśvara from Kalat near Manali. The stone statue adorns the sanctum of the Kapila Muni temple. A photograph of it was taken by H. Lee Shuttleworth in the beginning of this century and Maxwell recently published this by courtesy of P. Chetwode.[91] The statue measures 26 cm by 19 cm. Avalokiteśvara is in *lalitāsana* whereas Amitābha is shown in *dhyānamudrā*. The positions of the six hands of the deity are not clear; however, the left lower hand carries an *amṛtakalaśa*. Its unproportioned iconographic feature makes it a work of the medieval period when canonical dictates were not strictly adhered to.

Two exquisite Buddha statues of western-Himalayan workmanship were brought out of the Paraśurāma temple at Nirmand in 1981 during the Bhunda ceremony. Pictures of both have been published by Chetwode.[92] The larger statue wears a tight-fitting robe with the pleats arranged over the left shoulder. The smaller Buddha's right hand is in *varadamudrā* and with the left he holds his robe. Both show curly hair indicated by a succession of raised discs. The *uṣṇīṣa* of the larger Buddha ends with a well-defined hemispherical knob whereas the smaller Buddha has a pointed one. How these statues were deposited in the Paraśurāma temple at Nirmand remains unsolved. No Buddhist remains have so far been noticed at Nirmand and thus there is no likelihood of the existence of any Buddhist establishment at Nirmand. On the other hand, the Nirmand copperplate inscription of Samudrasena unambiguously states that there existed an *agrahāra* of the Atharvavedin brahmaṇas. They might have been imported to Nirmand by a trader from Kulu or Kangra (Trigarta) where Buddhism had been patronized by a few ruling houses and also by a mercantile community. Subsequently Buddhism suffered in these areas on account of the tripartite struggle between the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and the Pālas and also

because of an increasing rivalry between the ruling houses of Trigarta, Chamba, Kulu and Kashmir.

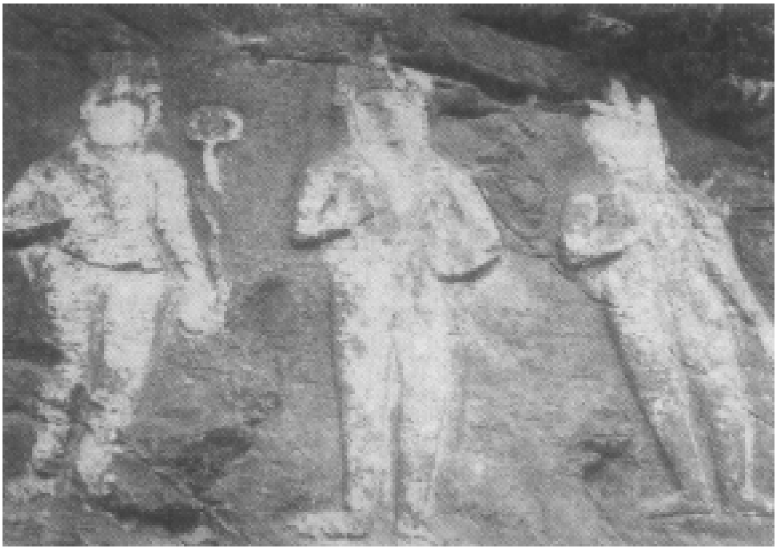
An object of the late seventh or early eighth century from Lahaul which needs to be commented upon is a marble head of Avalokiteśvara presently in the collection of the Ghandhola (Guru Ghantal) monastery.[93] It is a splendid specimen of the Kanauj-Kashmir and Trigarta styles which have produced several examples in wood, stone and metal. The marble head is a portable item—unlikely to be produced locally—which was brought to the Lahaul area either by a pilgrim or a trader. I have noticed several marble statues, dated between the ninth and eleventh centuries, in these monasteries which were established in the medieval times. One such marble Avalokiteśvara (height 18.5 cm) has been discovered from Somang near Shipki pass, and another from Chitkul, both in Kinnaur district. It does not show any Central-Asian traits but its closest parallels can be seen in Kulu. Its serene facial expression with a gentle smile, half-closed eyes, and three *ardhacandras* elaborately decorated with a chain of strings along the lower end of the crown resemble the traits seen on the crown of a stone sculpture from Bajaura discussed elsewhere. It differs greatly both in style and workmanship from the much later marble Avalokiteśvara enshrined in the sanctum of the Triloknath temple. Hutchison and Vogel have ridiculously associated both marble statues with Padmasambhava without any sound literary or archaeological evidence.[94]

The legendary association of Padmasambhava with Riwalsar and Ghandhola (not to be confused with Gondla) first advocated by Hutchison and Vogel[95] has been unthinkingly followed by numerous authors including the editor of the *Gazetteer of Lahul and Spiti*.[96] It is pertinent to note that Padmasambhava never personally visited either Mandi or Lahaul. The story of his life and the methods of *nirvāṇa* are contained in the *Padma-bka'i-thaṅ*, composed in AD 1352, several centuries after Padmasambhava.[97] Toussaint has, however, brought forward its date to AD 1412.[98] A few scholars have expressed their views that the Ghandhola mentioned in Canto 9 of the *Padma-bka'i-thaṅ* is the Ghandhola monastery in Lahaul.[99] There is not the slightest indication from the text that it refers to a place in Lahaul. The entire locale of the story is in Magadha, thus obviously referring to Bodh-gaya.[100] Bodh-gaya is known in Tibetan as Ghandhola, i.e. Gandhakuṭī where Buddha attained enlightenment. Soon after a referring to the monastery of Ghandhola the same canto describes the birth of Śāntarakṣita and Śikhaṇḍin to the king gTsug-phud Ris-bzaṅ and his queen Cho-doma. Equally fraught with danger is the

identification of Zahor with Mandi. This is a post-sixteenth-century identification when Mandi was known to the Tibetans as Zahor. No Buddhist archaeological remains which can be associated with Padmasambhava's time have been discovered in Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur. There are, however, several monasteries which belong to the rÑiṅ-ma-pa order founded by him. They are located at places such as Kungri in the Pin valley, Leo, Hango, Chulling and Chango in Kinnaur. No rÑiṅ-ma-pa monastery is, however, located in Lahaul.

Tibet's first Buddhist monastery at bSam-yas was completed in the second half of the eighth century. The completion of the bSam-yas monastery and a massive translation into Tibetan of Sanskrit Buddhist works marked an epochal event in the history of Buddhism. This also coincided with the abolition of the Bon rites by the Buddhist kings of Tibet. The *Padma-bka'i-thaṅ* makes an interesting reading as to how the 'Bon priests were given donkeys for transportation, the Bon of the svastika were put on bulls, and the svastikas themselves were restricted to the sands of High Tsang'.[101] The establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, Zhaṅ-zhuṅ and the adjoining kingdom of Kashmir paved the way for its speedy growth in the trans-Himalayan zone. The archaeological evidence of the first spread of Buddhism in Lahaul-Spiti can be seen in the massive rock carvings of three Bodhisattvas—Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi—from Gondla[102] and Kardang, respectively (Pl. IV). It is evident that these carvings belong to the pre-Rin-chen bzaṅ-po period because by the time of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po the earlier conception of only three families, of the Buddha, the Lotus and the Vajra, had gone up to five with the addition of Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi (i.e. Karma and Jewel families).

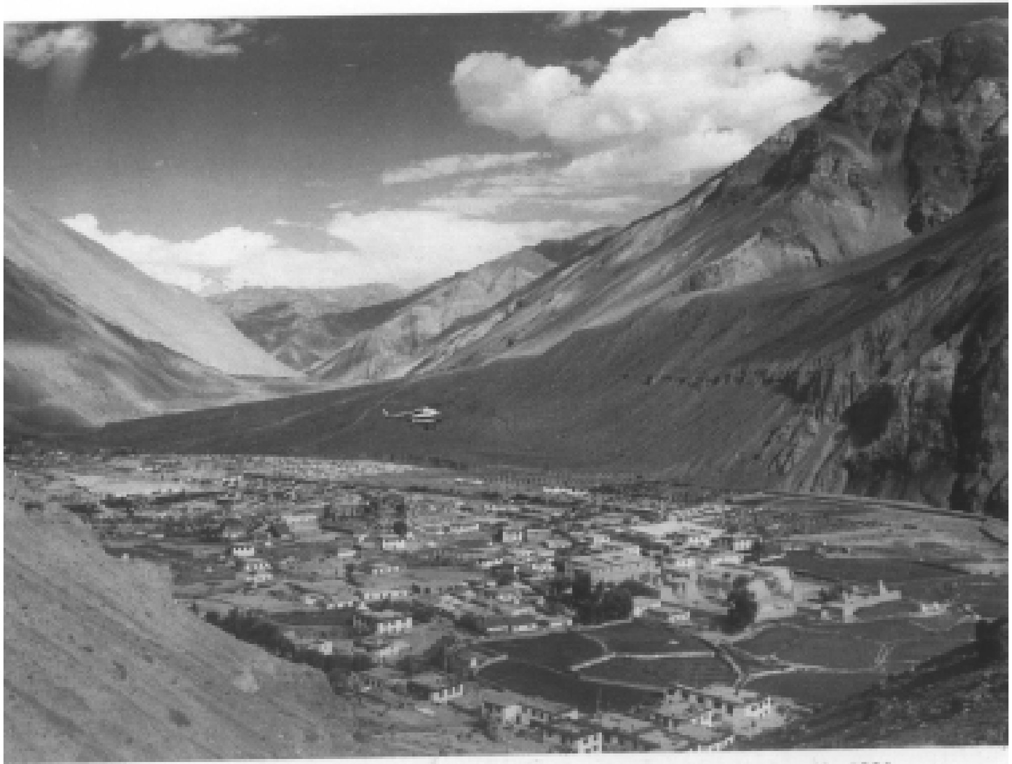
The perusal of the Buddhist archaeological evidence presented above makes it clear that several *saṅghārāmas* existed in the kingdom of Trigarta, Kulūta and Śatadru when Hiuen Tsang visited these areas in the beginning of the seventh century AD. The *Si-yu-ki* informs us that there were about two thousand Buddhists in Jālandhara,[103] and about twenty *saṅghārāmas* accommodating one thousand monks in Kulūta. A survey shows that the Buddhists of Trigarta, Kulūta and Śatadru belonged to the Mahāyāna school while the Hīnayāna school was gradually becoming almost extinct. The famous Buddhist dictum *ye dharma hetu prabhavā* inscribed on the pedestal discovered from Chahri indicates that the *Mahāyānasūtrasaṁgraha* and its popular *pratītyasmutpāda-gāthā*, as uttered by the Buddha, had become widely accepted amongst Buddhist monks and laymen. This maxim is found to be written over a dozen



Pl. IV Rock-carvings of Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Vajrapāṇi, Kardang, Lahaul-Spiti

times on the walls of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ at Tabo both in Tibetan *dbu-can* and Śāradā scripts. The Mūlasarvāstivādins seem to have occupied a prominent position in the north-western part of India and immensely influenced the philosophical developments in Himachal Pradesh. Lahaul-Spiti did not remain totally isolated during the 'first diffusion of Buddhism'; perhaps its prevalence in the valley prepared the ground for the 'second diffusion' during the tenth and eleventh centuries AD. Ghaṇṭāpāda[104], who was a contemporary of the Pāla king, Devapāla (AD 815–54), probably visited Lahaul. He is said to have meditated in a cave situated above the Ghandhola monastery. The entire mountain is locally known as Dril-bu-ri, i.e. the mountain of the bell (Ghaṇṭāgiri). The monastery of Ghandhola located in the lap of the mountain came to be known as Guru Ghaṇṭāra, and later on as 'Guru Ghaṇṭāla' in the post-thirteenth century AD because neither rGod-tshaṅ-pa nor Orgyan-pa has called this monastery by that name.

The decline of Buddhism in central and southern Himachal becomes evident from the fact that no antiquities of any quality have been discovered which can be dated to the post-ninth and tenth century. Interestingly, Buddhism received tremendous encouragement in Gu-ge and



Pl. V View of the Tabo monastery celebrating a 1000 years of its existence in 1996



Pl. VI Close view of the temples and *stūpas* within the complex from the east

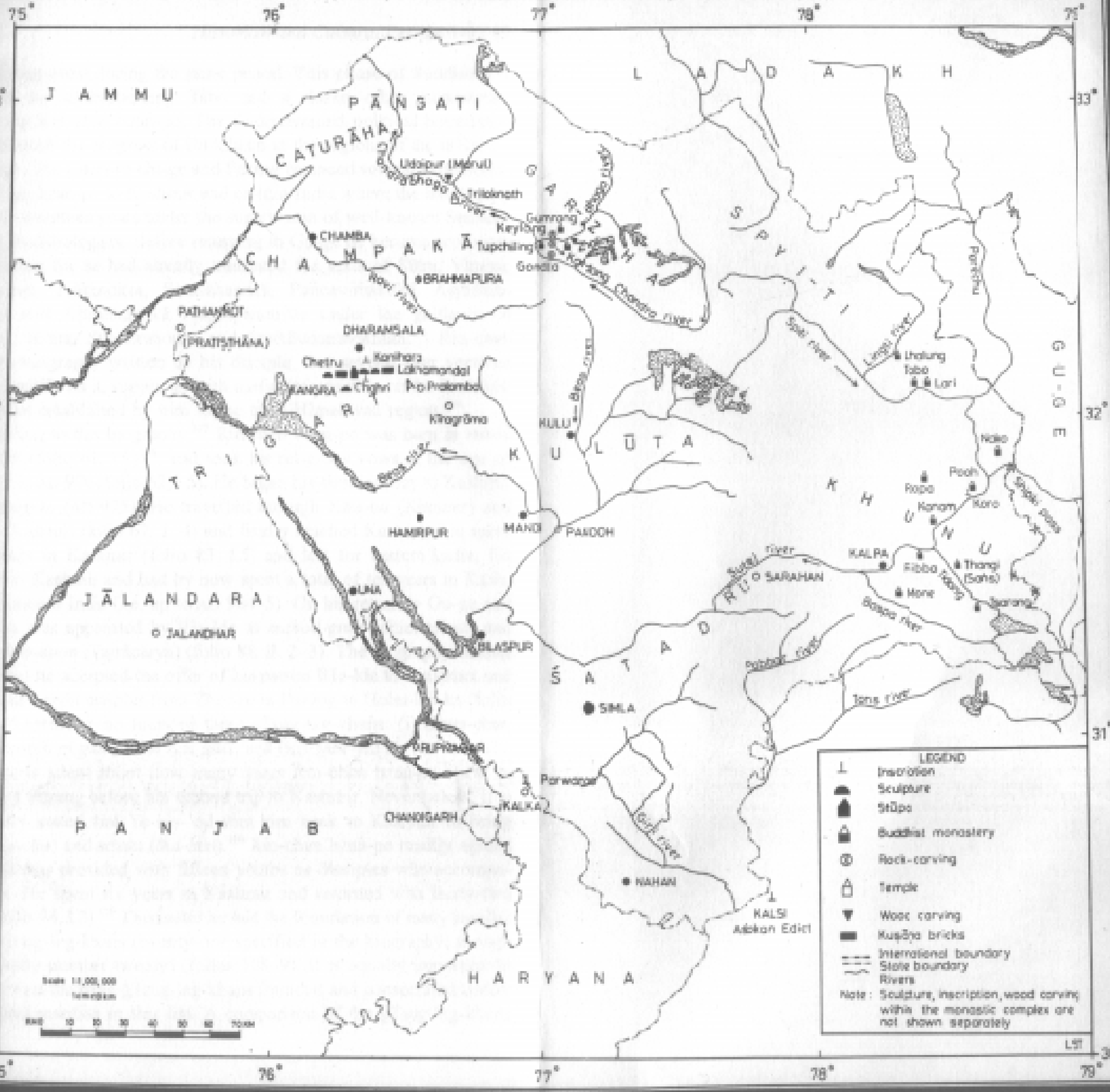


Fig. 3 Buddhist archaeological sites in Himachal Pradesh *c.* AD 100–1100

the adjoining areas during the same period. This phase of Buddhism is important for understanding Tabo and a dozen other monasteries founded by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po. The ill-determined political boundaries did not disrupt the progress of Buddhism in the regions of the mṄa'-ris skor-gsum. The rulers of Gu-ge and Purang financed several expeditions of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po to Kashmir and eastern India where the latter spent a total of seventeen years under the supervision of well-known Sanskritists and Buddhologists. Before returning to Gu-ge he became proficient in translation for he had already translated the texts of Sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma, Prātimokṣa, Śatasāhasrikā, Pañcaviṁśatikā, Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā and Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitās under the guidance of Jinamitra, Jñāna, Silendrabodhi and Śraddhākaravarman.[105] Rin-chen bzaṅ-po's biography written by his disciple, and several later versions based primarily on it, supply us with useful information on the Buddhist monasteries established by him in the trans-Himalayan region.[106]

According to this biography,[107] Rin-chen bzaṅ-po was born in *rta-lo* in AD 958 (folio 61, l.1)[108], and took his religious vows at the age of thirteen, i.e. AD 970 (folio 62, l.5). He began his first journey to Kashmir in the *phag-lo* (AD 975). He travelled through Khu-nu (Kinnaur) and Gar-zha (Lahaul) (folio 67, l. 4) and finally reached Kashmir. He spent seven years in Kashmir (folio 83, l.5) and left for eastern India. He returned to Kashmir and had by now spent a total of ten years in Kashmir and eastern India (i.e. up to AD 984–5). On his return to Gu-ge and Purang he was appointed by lHa-lde as *mchod-gnas* (chief-priest) and *rdo-rje slob-dpon* (Vajrācārya) (folio 88, ll. 2–3). The biography further tells us that he accepted the offer of his patron lHa-lde to construct one hundred and eight temples from Zher-pa in Purang to Hobu-laṅ-ka (folio 88, l.4). Thereafter, he founded three gTsug-lag-khaṅs: (i) Khva-char, (ii) mTho-ldiṅ *gi gliṅ phran bcu gñis*, and (iii) Mar-yul *du* Ñar-ma. The biography is silent about how many years Rin-chen bzaṅ-po spent in Gu-ge and Purang before his second trip to Kashmir. Nevertheless, it is specifically stated that Ye-śes-'od sent him back to Kashmir to bring books (*pe-cha*) and artists (*lha-bzo*).[109] Rin-chen bzaṅ-po readily agreed to go and was provided with fifteen youths as disciples who accompanied him. He spent six years in Kashmir and returned with thirty-two artists (folio 94, l.2).[110] Thereafter he laid the foundation of many smaller (*chuṅ*) gTsug-lag-khaṅs (twenty-one specified in the biography; though they actually number twenty) (folios 108–9). It is equally important to point out that the three gTsug-lag-khaṅs founded and consecrated earlier do not find mention in this list. A comparison of the gTsug-lag-khaṅs

given in six different versions of his biography makes interesting reading as given below in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Names of twenty-one smaller gTsug-lag-khaṅs mentioned in six different versions of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po's biography

	Tucci, IT, ii, pp. 71–3	CBM, No. 3, fols. (108–9)	CBM, No. 5, fol. 183	CBM, No. 6, fol. 266	dGe-rgan's LDGR, p. 282	Lokesh Chandra's version in IT, ii, p. 116
1	Zher sa	Zher pa	bZheṅs ver	bZhes ver	bZhes ver	bZhes ver
2	Go khar	Go khar	Go khar	Go khar	Go khar	Go khar
3	Pu ri	Bo ri	'O ri	Pho ri	Pho ri	Pho ri
4	gYaṅ skur	gYaṅ sgur	Ba laṅ myur	gYaṅ skur	gYaṅ skur	gYaṅ skur
5	Ti yag	Ti yag	Ti lag	Ti yag	Ti yag	Ti yag
6	Tsaṅ med	Tshad med	Tshaṅs maṅ	Tshaṅs med	Tshaṅs med	Chaṅs med
7	sNe'u	sNe'u	Sni'u	sNe'u	sNe'u	sNe'u
8	Ro dpag	Ro pag	Ro spag	Ro pag	Ro pag	Ro pag
9	Ta pho	rTa pho	rTa pho	Ta pho	Ta pho	Ta pho
10	Re hri	Ri khri	Dre ti	Ri hri	Ri hri	Ri hri
11	Dril chuṅ	Dril chuṅ	Dril chuṅ	Dril chuṅ	Dril chuṅ	Dral chuṅ
12	sGyu man	rGyu laṅ	sKyu vaṅ	rGyu laṅ	rGyu laṅ	rGyu laṅ
13	Lari	La ri	Raṅ ri	La ri	Li ri	Li ri
14				Zaṅ vaṅ	Zad vaṅ	Zad vaṅ
15				Pi ti	Pi ti	sPyi ti
16				Ti ri	Te ri	Te ri
17	Phur khar	Pur khar				
18	Ñe van(ṅ)	Ñe vaṅ				
19	Śo liṅ	Zho liṅ				
20	bCog ro	Cog ro				
21	Draṅ draṅ	Hraṅ traṅ				
22	Śaṅ raṅ	Śaṅs				
23	Rig rtse Tsa raṅ	rTsa raṅ				
24			Bar va			

Taking into consideration all the names listed in the six versions of the biography the total comes to twenty-four. The table clearly shows

that thirteen names with minor variations in spellings are common in all versions. Zaṅ-vaṅ, Pi-ti and Ti-ri occur in the last three sources, whereas seven names are common in the first two sources. Bar-va is mentioned only in source no. 3 (CMB, No. 5). Two versions (Tucci and CMB, No. 3), however, add five more gTsug-lag khaṅs: De-gar in Lho, dPag, Drug-phag of Mon (Kamru), Ka-nam (bKa'-nam) of Ṅa-ri or mṄa'-ris, and lastly sPu of Roṅ-chuṅ. Of the three smaller gTsug-lag-khaṅs the following are located in Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts: Ro-dpag, Śaṅ-raṅ (or Śaṅs), Rig-rtse Tsa-raṅ (Kinnaur); Ta-po (or Ta-pho), Lari (Spiti), and Zho-liṅ (or Śo-liṅ) in Lahaul. The local traditions associate the temples of Ribba, Nako and Lhalung with Rin-chen bzaṅ-po. The archaeological investigations carried out by me in each of these temples do not support the local traditions.

The central question which needs to be addressed is that the rulers of Western Tibet were so worried about the practice of Buddhism in their kingdom that they were forced to issue strict warnings against the practitioners of corrupt rites and malignant religious offerings causing harm to men and animals. Ye-śes-'od was the first to issue an ordinance (*bka'-śog*) denouncing such practices. Thus, he pronounced:

> You abbots, Tantrists, living in the villages,
> Without having any relation to these Three Ways,
> Claim 'we follow the Mahāyāna'.
> Entirely devoid of the conduct of Mahāyāna,
> Claim to be Mahāyānists,
> This is like a beggar saying that he is a king.
> To claim to be Mahāyānist, though one is not,
> Is like a donkey wearing the skin of a lion.[111]

It was believed that by practising certain texts of the Anuttarayogatantra one could achieve enlightenment in the course of a single life-span as opposed to the path of a Bodhisattva involving aeons to achieve the final goal of Buddha-hood.

The rulers of Western Tibet adopted a three-pronged strategy to check the spread of corrupt practices in Buddhism: (i) they invited the most venerated teachers of Indian Buddhism from Kashmir and eastern India to Tibet to impart true knowledge of the Sūtra and Tantra literature to the Tibetans; (ii) they also financed the building of temples and *stūpas* and provided each temple with all the essential items of worship, and copies of newly-translated Sanskrit Buddhist texts, and (iii) by launching a frontal attack on those texts which advocated the practice of *sbyor, sgrol* and *tshogs*. Ye-śes-'od's grand-nephew Pho-braṅ Zhi-ba-'od also

issued similar ordinances in which he listed about seventy-two texts not to be practised in Western Tibet.[112] Rin-chen bzaṅ-po, who is popularly known as the Great Translator (*lo-tsā-ba*), along with Indian and Tibetan collaborators translated an enormous number of Buddhist texts into Tibetan. Tabo monastery's library was witness to a high-class literary activity undertaken by Ye-śes-'od and his successors. The *Deb-ther sṅon-po* aptly summarized the literary accomplishments achieved during that period in the following words:

> . . . lHa bla-ma Ye-śes-'od invited the East Indian paṇḍita Dharmapāla. . . . Further in the time lHa-lde, Subhūti, Śrīśānti, known as the Great Paṇḍita of Kasmira (*Kha-che paṇ-chen*), was invited . . . Numerous learned translators, disciples of the Great Translator . . . , translated numerous texts from the Vinaya-piṭaka . . . the Prajñāpāramitā, and many Tantrik works. In particular dGar-ba'i blo-gros of rMa translated numerous texts, including Pramāṇavārtika, its autocommentary, Devendramati's commentary and the commentary of Śākyamati. . . . The great paṇḍita Jñānaśrī came to Tibet. . . . Numerous paṇḍitas also came, and made numerous excellent translations. In the time of 'Od-lde, Atīśa was invited and reformed the Doctrine. In the time of the king's son rTse-lde in the year Fire-Male-Dragon (*me-pho-'brug*—AD 1076) most of the great Tripiṭakadharas of dBus, gTsaṅ and Khams assembled to a Religious Council (chos-'khor). . . . Each of them set in motion the Wheel of the Doctrine.[113]

The arrival of Atīśa in Western Tibet in AD 1042 coincided with the completion of repairs in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ at Tabo, personally supervized by Byaṅ-chub-'od. Atīśa's famous work, *Bodhipathapradīpa* prescribed the gradual path towards enlightenment. The philosophical ideas put forward by Atīśa became the *summum bonum* of the bKa'-gdams-pa school founded by his disciple 'Brom-ston in AD 1056 at Rva-sgreng. Two temples within the complex at Tabo are dedicated to 'Brom-ston with the suffixes *chuṅ-ba* (smaller) and *chen-po* (greater).The bKa'-gdams-pa sect considerably influenced both royalty and the layman even after Rin-chen bzaṅ-po's death in AD 1055. The construction of temples such as Alchi in Ladakh, Nako in Kinnaur and Gumrang in Lahaul amply corroborate this.

When bKa'-gdams-pa school had gained the widest popularity in the mṄa'-ris skor-gsum, there emerged another school in Tibet whose origins were related to the Tantra masters of eastern India (Bihar and West Bengal). This school is primarily associated with Tilopa, who was a contemporary of the Pāla king Mahipāla I (AD 988–1038), and his foremost disciple Nāropa (AD 956–1040).[114] In Indian-Buddhist tradition the

teachers of this school are known by the eighty-four Siddhas, who were all human teachers and free wandering ascetics. The names of the eighty-four masters are preserved in Tibetan works. Nāropa's disciple Mar-pa (AD 1012–96) and his pupil Mi-la ras-pa (AD 1040–1123) popularized the practice of yoga in Tibet. Later, this school was known in Tibetan tradition as the bKa'-brgyud-pa school. Since the *guru* or preceptor had a special place in this school, it split into several branches bearing the name of either founder or place: Phag-mo gru, Karma-pa, Tshal-pa, 'Bri-guṅ-pa, sTag-luṅ-pa and 'Brug-pa.[115] The 'Bri-guṅ-pa branch was patronized in Ladakh by dṄos-grub-mgon in the beginning of the thirteenth century. This sub-school could not penetrate into Lahaul-Spiti. However, after a brief visit by sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa in these areas the 'Brug-pa sub-sect dominated the religious life of this district from the seventeenth century onwards.

Two Tibetan travellers provide interesting details about the state of Buddhism in Himachal Pradesh during the thirteenth century. They include rGod-tshaṅ-pa (AD 1189–1258) and his disciple Orgyan-pa (AD 1230–1309). rGod-tshaṅ-pa travelled in Lahaul-Spiti and Kangra between AD 1213–17 and his disciple around AD 1250. The former, after visiting two important centres of Buddhism in Guge, Tholing and Mang-nang, went to Spiti where he met a *grub-thob chen-po* (a great Siddha) named Kha-rag-pa.[116] He belonged to the rDzogs-chen school. The teachings of the rDzogs-chen were condemned both by Ye-śes-'od and by Zhi-ba-'od. The latter is more specific in denouncing the *Kun-byed* in his edict, the fundamental text of the teachings of the rÑiṅ-ma-pa. rGod-tshaṅ-pa is silent on the Tabo monastery. However, he went from Spiti to Lahaul (Gar-śa) where he saw a mountain called 'Ghandhala'.[117] He also refers to the existence of a small *dgon-pa* (monastery) above the village of Tupchiling (Dub-chi-ling). It is quite clear from his accounts that the monastery had not yet been named Guru Ghantal. He went to see the *lo-tsā-ba* of mGar.[118] To my estimate the mGar stands for a region rather than a specific place in Lahaul. It includes Kardang, Keylong, Gumrang and Kolong. After spending three days in Lahaul he left for Chamba via Kugti pass. From Chamba he went to Dza-lan-dha-ra (Jālandhara, i.e. Kangra). His description of Nagarkot is fairly good. Temple of Vajreśwarī, which he calls Dza-va-la-mu-gi (Jvālāmukhī), attracted both Buddhists and Brahmanists (*phyi naṅ*).[119] He also visited the cave of Samvara. He spent five months at Nagarkot and thereafter returned to Tibet via Kulūta (Kulu). In Kulu, at a place called Siddhi,

he saw on a stone the foot-prints of Buddha (*rdo-la saṅs-rgyas kyi zhabs-rjes bzhugs-pa*).[120]

Orgyan-pa also visited Nagarkot and Ghaṭali, also called Chandrabhaga, on whose banks was situated the town of Indranīla. Could Ghaṭali be identified with Ghandhola? What becomes clear from the account of the Tibetan travellers is that Buddhism did not disappear totally from Kangra and Kulu. Meditation and offering prayers in the temple of Vajreśwarī is significant since Jālandhara was considered the most important among the twenty-four places of the Vajrakāya in India. All such places are supposed to be the mystic abodes of numerous manifestations of Heruka. The presence of the rDzogs-chen in upper Kinnaur or the lower Spiti basin is significant for the later development of the rÑiṅ-ma-pa school which still influences the Pin valley of Spiti, and the Hangrang valley of Kinnaur.

Very little is known about the spread of Buddhism in Lahaul-Spiti during the fourteenth century. The emergence of the dGe-lugs-pa school in Tibet in the second half of the fourteenth century brought new life to Buddhism in the Himalaya. Several monastic centres of the bKa'-gdams-pa sect, which were either on the verge of collapse or already in ruins, were taken over by the dGe-lugs-pa sect whose followers bore the name bKa'-gdams-pa gsar-ma, i.e., new bKa'-gdams-pa. The founder of this school was Tsoṅ-kha-pa (AD 1357–1419). Whether he ever visited Spiti is uncertain but the stone inscriptions from the Spiti valley record the names of Tsoṅ-kha-pa and his immediate contemporaries mKhas-grub-rje (AD 1385–1438), Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros (AD ?–1462) and dGe-'dun-grub (AD 1391–1474). Tsoṅ-kha-pa and his two foremost disciples, rGyal-tshab-rje (AD 1364–1432) and mKhas-grub-rje, known collectively as the *yab-sras-gsum* (i.e. the 'master' and his two 'spiritual sons') are painted on the walls of numerous Buddhist monasteries attributed to the dGe-lugs-pa sect. The special status accorded to Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros in the murals of the dKyil-khaṅ at Tabo seems to indicate that he was responsible for reviving the earlier academic atmosphere of Tabo.[121] Two Central Tibetan works, *bKa'-gdams gsar-rñin* compiled by bSod-nams grags-pa in AD 1529, and the *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, completed in AD 1698, tell us that Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros founded Likir and Bar-skya' monasteries in Ladakh.[122] It seems quite possible that the number of temples at Tabo went up to six by the addition of the gSer-khaṅ, dKyil-khaṅ and the mGon-khaṅ in the second half of the fifteenth century AD. The dGe-lugs-pa sect gained an upper hand in Spiti and monasteries at Ki and Dankhar seem to have been founded in the post-fifteenth century

AD. According to a census conducted by the order of the Dalai Lama in AD 1663, Tabo had fifty-nine monks.[123] A few monasteries in Kinnaur located at Kanam and Tsarang were taken over by the dGe-lugs-pas. The list of the fourteen abbots of Tabo monastery given in the *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po* makes it clear that Tshe-riṅ, one of the abbots of Tabo monastery, was alive during the time of the census conducted in AD 1663. By assigning a period of twenty years for each abbot, the first can safely be placed in the beginning of the fifteenth century, i.e. AD 1418 (see Appendix III). The dGe-lugs-pa could not establish their base in Lahaul because the Mahāsiddha (*grub-thub chen-po*) tradition preceded the arrival of the former. It helped the Lho 'Brug-pa sub-sect of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school not only to take over the two bKa'-gdams-pa monasteries at Gumrang and Zholing but also to establish a firm hold in the Chandra and Bhaga valleys. The 'Brug-pa sub-sect had many followers in Lahaul when sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa visited the valley in the beginning of the seventeenth century.[124] He also visited Zangskar and met the great Siddha bDe-ba rgya-mtsho there. The latter probably spent several years in Lahaul as his name is recorded on a *maṇi*-wall inscription found at Gozang.[125] sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa spent about three months in Lahaul and visited places such as Khangsar, Ghandhola, Gushal, Dartse, Keylong, Triloknath and Maru (Udaipur).[126] It was Tshe-riṅ dpal-lde, mentioned twice in an inscription found at Khangsar,[127] who provides sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa and his disciples service free of cost. Two important observations of sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa need close attention. The first is concerned with the identification of the Avalokiteśvara stone image at Triloknath, which he identified as the '*Gro-drug sgrol-ye-śes*,[128] an identification also given in the Triloknath *mahātmya*. This form of Avalokiteśvara was popular in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, for similar examples have been found at Gyabang, Thangi (Kinnaur); Bya-ma Khumbu near Sanku and Tonde in Zangskar.[129] The second concerns the Buddhist teaching imparted by sTag-tshaṅ ras-pa to the younger sister of the king and her son, which consisted of the '*mahāmudrā* (*phyag-rgya chen-po*), the six laws of Naropa, the Prāṇayoga, the law of the Karmic connection, the esoteric methods, the teachings of Mar-pa, Mi-la ras-pa, and Dvags-po-rje . . . the Maṇi-bka'-'bum, etc. . .'.[130] The popularity of the bKa'-brgyud-pa sect in Lahaul is further confirmed by an inscription from Khangsar. which begins with salutations to 'Ti-lo, Na-ro, Mar-pa, Mi-la and rGam-po'.[131]

Any discussion on Buddhism in Lahaul-Spiti would remain incomplete if we do not mention the Sa-skya-pa school. The only monastery

of this school is located at Tengyud a little above Kaza. Tucci has, however, noticed a few inscriptions at Kaza referring to a Ladakhi king, Ñi-ma rnam-rgyal, who caused the Sa-skya-pa monastery at mKhar-rtse to be renovated.[132] The *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po* tells us that Kanam (Kinnaur) monastery also belonged to the Sa-skya-pa but later it was taken over by the dGe-lugs-pa school. Originally, it was a bKa'-gdams-pa establishment, founded by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po along with Pooh, Mon and Lho. Thus the transition from the bKa'-gdams-pa to Sa-skya-pa to dGe-lugs-pa, and finally to the 'Brug-pa sect is significant.

The brief survey of Buddhism presented above makes it clear that Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna with a corpus of gods and goddesses of the Buddhist pantheon have survived to this day. The incorporation of numerous local deities, and those of the Bon tradition within the Buddhist fold was one of the peculiarities of western-Himalayan Buddhism. Important schools and sub-schools of Buddhism with fluctuating fortunes gained prominence in Lahaul-Spiti: 'Brug-pa in Lahaul, dGe-lugs-pa in Spiti, bKa'-gdams-pa both in Lahaul and Spiti, rÑiṅ-ma-pa and the Sa-skya-pa in some remote localities of Spiti. The position of each school becomes clearer when we look at the list of important monasteries, according to their affiliation, given below:

bKa'-gdams-pa:	Tabo, Lari (now in ruins) Lhalung (Spiti); Gumrang and Zholing (Lahaul).
dGe-lugs-pa:	Dankhar, Ki, Rangrik, Kibbar. The dGelugs-pa took over the earlier bKa'-gdams-pa monasteries at Tabo and Lhalung.
bKa'-brgyud-pa: (sub-sect: 'Brug-pa)	Shashur, Tayul, Gemur, Tingal, Kardang, Ghandhola and Gushal. Two bKa'-gdams-pa monasteries located at Gumrang and Zholing have been taken over by the 'Brug-pa sub-sect.
rÑiṅ-ma-pa:	Kungri and Mud, both in the Pin valley.
Sa-skya-pa:	Tengyud and Kaza.

NOTES

1. *See* George N. Roerich, tr., *The Blue Annals*, parts I and II, Delhi, 1988, p. 1.
2. Some excerpts from the biographies of both pilgrims can be seen in

Giuseppe Tucci's *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley*, Calcutta, 1940.

3. Ibid., pp. 65–83.
4. These revenue documents have been procured from the patwar circles of Pooh, Tabo and Pin. We would like to publish them soon.
5. C. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603–1721*, The Hague, 1924, pp. 94–118.
6. James B. Fraser, however, personally did not visit Spiti but a chapter on the Bhotia districts of the Himalayan region has been appended to his work. *See* Fraser, *Journal of a Tour Through Parts of the Snowy Ranges of the Himala* [sic] *Mountains*, pp. 281–331.
7. A. Gerard *Accounts of Koonawar in the Himalaya*; *also see* George Lloyd, ed., *Narrative of a Journey from Caunpoor*, pp. 54 ff.
8. J.D. Herbert's account of the Spiti valley is far more interesting than those of his predecessors'. He is one of the earliest European travellers to prepare the vocabulary of Kinnauri and Bhotia words along with their English equivalents; see, 'An Account of a Tour . . .', *AR*, vol. 15, 1825, pp. 417–21; for trade routes, see pp. 424–6.
9. Trebeck's account of Spiti can be read in W. Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir, in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara from 1819 to 1825*, ed. H.H. Wilson, 2 vols, London 1844, vol. II, ch. IX, pp. 45–81.
10. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, 'On the Valley of the Setlej River, in the Himalaya Mountains, from the Journal of Captain A. Gerard', *TRAS*, vol. I, 1827, p. 372.
11. Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India, 1829–1832: Being a Selection from the Correspondence of Victor Jacquemont*, tr. Catherine A. Phillips, London, 1936.
12. For J. G. Gerard's observations on Spiti's geography, elevation, climate, trade and agriculture, *see* his 'Observations on the Spiti Valley and Circumjacent Country within the Himalaya' *AR*, vol. 19, 1833, pp. 238–78.
13. Thomas Hutton in *JASB*, vol. VIII, 1839, pp. 901–50; vol. IX, 1840, pp. 489–513 and pp. 555–81.
14. J.D. Cunningham in *JASB*, vol. XIII, 1844, pp. 172–253.
15. Alexander Cunningham, 'Journal of a trip Through Kulu and Lahul, to the Chu Mureri Lake, in Ladak, during the Months of August and September 1846', *JASB*, vol. XVII, 1848, pp. 201–30; also see his, *Ladakh: Physical, Statistical, and Historical; with Notices of the Surrounding Countries*, rpt, New Delhi, 1970.
16. Thomas Thomson, *Western Himalaya and Tibet: A Narrative of a Journey Through the Mountains of Northern India during the years 1847-48*, rpt, Kathmandu, 1979, pp. 120–31.
17. One of the best and most reliable descriptions of Spiti is found in W.C.

Hay's, 'Report on the Valley of Spiti and Facts Collected With a view to a Future Revenue Settlement', *JASB*, vol. XIX, 1850, pp. 429–51. The total population of Spiti in 1849 was 1,607, including Lamas, numbering 193.

18. P. H. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour Through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Tibet*, London, 1864.
19. J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, 'History of Kulu State', *JPHS*, vol. VII, no. 2, 1919, pp. 130–76; idem, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, 2 vols, Lahore 1933, vol. II, pp. 484–8.
20. Several viewpoints put forward by J. Hutchison and J.Ph. Vogel regarding the early history of Spiti need to be changed substantially in view of the new data available. Whatever has been remarked by the authors on Buddhism and historical survey is repeated in the *Gazetteer of Lahul and Spiti*, Simla, 1975, pp. 40–41.
21. Census of India: 1981, *District Census Handbook: Lahul and Spiti District*, Simla, 1982, p. 3, para 5.
22. S. Beal, tr., *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, rpt, Delhi, 1969, book IV, p. 177; Thomas Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, eds T.W. Rhys Davids and S.W. Bushell, rpt, Delhi, 1961, p. 298.
23. Ibid.
24. For the latest survey of these petroglyphs, see Giacomella Orofino, 'A Note on Some Tibetan Petroglyphs of the Ladakh Area', *EW*, vol. 40, nos 1–4, Dec. 1990, pp. 173–200.
25. A.H. Francke has translated it in J.Ph. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pt. I, ASI NIS, vol. XXXVI, Calcutta, 1911, pp. 252–5.
26. Ibid., p. 254.
27. Ibid., p. 253.
28. Ibid., p. 87, verse 86.
29. Ibid., p. 184, l. 3.
30. Ibid., p. 193, l. 4.
31. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, vol. II, p. 484. The authors added that the copperplate, which is dated in the year 6 corresponds to AD 630; this is wrong and it belongs to AD 612–13; *see* J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Gupta Kings*, p. 287.
32. R.S. Tripathi, 'On the Extent of Harṣa's Empire', *JBORS*, vol. XVIII, 1932, pp. 296–331.
33. For more details, *see* G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, Roma, 1956, pp. 51–60.
34. A.H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, pt. II, ASI NIS, vol. L, rpt. New Delhi, 1972, p. 35, l. 17.
35. Zahiruddin Ahmad, 'New Light on the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War of 1679–84', *EW*, vol. XVIII, nos 1–2, 1968, p. 340, fn. 5.
36. For an assessment of a fifty-four-line inscription from Lhalung's gSer-khan, see Laxman S. Thakur, 'Tibetan Historical Inscriptions from Kin-

naur and Lahaul-Spiti: A Survey of Recent Discoveries', *Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies,* Wien, vol. II, pp. 967–79.

37. The full title is preserved in the Koro inscription near Pooh in Kinnaur.
38. *See* chapters V and VII.
39. Francke, *Antiquities*, pt II, p. 35, l. 26 and p. 96.
40. Vogel, *Antiquities*, nos 23, 26–9, 32–3.
41. Daya Ram Sahni and A. H. Francke, 'References to the Bhoṭṭas or Bhauṭṭas in the Rājataraṅgiṇī of Kashmir', *IA*, vol. XXXVII, 1908, p. 188.
42. Translated in David L. Snellgrove and T. Skorupski's *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*, vol. I, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 82–3.
43. Francke, *Antiquities*, pt II, p. 110.
44. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, pp. 76–7.
45. A.H. Francke, *First Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from West Tibet*, Leh, 1906, no. 128, p. 25, ll. 3–4.
46. Ibid., l. 2
47. Ibid., p. 26
48. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers*, p. 113
49. Translated by Zahiruddin Ahmad, 'New Light', p. 348.
50. Luciano Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh: c. 950–1842 AD,* Roma, 1977, pp. 78–9. Also see his two interesting articles: 'The Tibetan-Ladakhi Moghal War of 1681–83', *IHQ*, vol. XXIII, 1947, pp. 169–99; 'Notes on Ladakhi History', *IHQ*, vol. XXIV, 1948, pp. 213–35.
51. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District: Kulu, Lahul and Spiti: 1897*, pts II to IV, Lahore 1899, p. 77 (Spiti).
52. Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, p. 95.
53. Francke, Antiquities, pt. II, p. 202.
54. A.F.P. Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahul and Spiti,* rpt, Delhi, 1972, p. 100.
55. Francke, *First Collection*, no. 135, p. 27, l. 1.
56. Ibid., no. 140, p. 29, l. 12.
57. S.S. Gergan, *bLa-dvags rgyal-rabs 'chi-med gter*, Srinagar, 1975, p. 464.
58. A. Gerard, *Account of Koonawur*, p. 147; *see* George Lloyd, ed., *Narratives of a Journey*, vol. II, pp. 249–50.
59. Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, vol. II, pp. 63–4; this event has also been recorded by Moorcroft, see ibid., vol. I, p. 457. The year of the raids of Kulu on Spiti is given as 1819 by Hutchison and Vogel (*History of the Panjab Hill States*, vol. II, p. 487) and 1822 by L. Petech (*The Kingdom of Ladakh*, p. 131).
60. For a complete history of the Dogra conquest of Ladakh, see Cunningham, *Ladakh*, pp. 333–46; Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, pt. II, pp. 127–38; *also see* C.L. Datta, *Ladakh and Western Himalayan Politics:*

1819–1848 (The Dogra Conquest of Ladakh, Baltistan and West Tibet and Reactions to Other Powers), New Delhi, 1973, pp. 105–18.

61. For a complete text and translation of this inscription, see chapter VII.
62. C.U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, etc.*, Calcutta, 1931, vol. XII, pp. 21–2.
63. A.H. Diack, *Final Report on the Revised Settlement of the Kulu Sub-division of the Kangra District,* Lahore, 1898, p. 13.
64. J.B. Lyall, *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of Kangra District, Punjab,* Lahore, 1889, p. 114. The revenue assessment of Spiti given by Lyall differs from the one provided by William Hay who says that 'an annual revenue of 2,000 rupees was paid to Rājā Galāb Singh. Besides this 100 sheep within five years; and, in 1839, three Ghoonts were presented as nazzars, and one Ghoont annually for the four succeeding years' (Hay in *JASB*, vol. XIX, p. 438). The latter account seems to be correct. Prior to 1839, Hay added that the revenue 'was always paid to the Rājā of Ladak, as follows; 396 rupees in cash, 200 lacs of grain, 100 mūndīs, 34 pieces of cloth (Barmūr), and 132 shūgūs of paper, equal to 660 Hindustani tāktehs'. Spiti paid to Kulu six rupees, and two pieces of cloth, as a tribute; and to Bushahr, 30 pieces of cloth.
65. Diack, *Final Report*, p. 13; Hay, *JSAB*, p. 438.
66. G.C. Barnes, *Report on the Settlement in the District of Kangra in the Trans-Satluj States*, Lahore, 1855; later on reprinted under the title, *Report on the Settlement in the District of Kangra*, Lahore, 1871, p. 63.
67. Bachittar Singh, *Final Report of the 4th Revised Settlement of the Kulu Sub-division of the Kangra District, 1945–1952*, Chandigarh, 1952.
68. In October 1961, the Commission submitted its report, and Lahaul and Spiti are discussed in chapter 40; for more details, *see Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission*, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 423–7.
69. The measurements have been provided by Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Forest Range Officer, Tabo.
70. Francke's several articles deal with the rock-carvings of Ladakh. Those which deserve notice are: 'Notes on Rock-carvings from Lower Ladakh', *IA*, vol. XXXI, 1902, pp. 398–401; 'Some More Rock-carvings from Lower Ladakh', *IA*, vol. XXXII, 1903, pp. 361–3; 'Kleine Archäologische Erträge einer Missionsreise nach Zangskar in Westtibet', *ZDMG*, vol. LX, 1906, pp. 645–61; 'Historische Documente von Khalatse in West-Tibet (Ladakh)', *ZDMG*, vol. LXI, 1907, pp. 583–614. The last two articles are in German.
71. The photographs of numerous rock-carvings taken by G. Tucci have been published by G. Orofino, see fn. 24.
72. G. Tucci, *Santi e Briganti nel Tibet Ignoto*, Milano, 1937, pp. 133 ff.
73. Inscriptions inscribed on three petroglyphs have been translated in chapter VII.

74. Very few works on the extent of the Zhaṅ-zhuṅ kingdom, its language and grammar are available. Mention should be made of Eric Haah, *The Zhang-zhung Language, a Grammar and Dictionary of the Unexplored Language of the Tibetan Bonpos*, Acta Jutlandica, XL, 1, Copenhagen, 1968; Helmut Hoffmann, 'Žaṅ-žuṅ: the Holy Language of the Tibetan Bon-po', *ZDMG*, vol. 117, pt. 2, 1967, pp. 376–81. Hoffmann has given a linguistic table showing the words and meanings of the Zhaṅ-zhuṅ and other Himalayan languages. Also see an equally interesting article by F.W. Thomas, 'The Źaṅ-źuṅ Language', *JRAS*, 1933, pp. 405–10; Ñi-ma Grags-pa, *Tibetan-Źang Źung Dictionary*, Delhi, 1966.
75. E. Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Aśoka*: *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Delhi, 1969, vol. I, pp. 27–50.
76. J. Ph. Vogel, 'Two Brāhmī and Kharoshṭhī Rock-Inscriptions in the Kangra Valley', *EI*, vol. VII, 1902–3, pp. 116–19.
77. For the typology of symbols on the coins of the tribal republics, *see* Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta, *A Tribal History of Ancient India: A Numismatic Approach*, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 79–82 for Kulūtas; pp. 99–103 for Kuṇindas; pp. 122–4 for Mālavas; pp. 214–19 for Yaudheyas; pp. 190–1 for Vṛṣṇis.
78. George C.M. Birdwood, *The Industrial Arts of India*, London, 1880, pp. 154–5, pl. 12.
79. Now it seems quite possible that it was found at the confluence of the Chandra and Bhaga rivers near Tandi in Lahaul as Charles Horne's description would have us believe. *See* his 'Notes on an Ancient Vase, with an Account of the Engraving Thereupon', *JRAS*, n.s. vol. 5, 1871, pp. 367–75. Perhaps without personally examining the site, he added: 'It is well known that, from very early times, and probably during the Gupta period, Buddhist erections stood on the spot where the vase was found, which buildings have long since gone to ruin, the spot itself being now held sacred to Triloknath . . .' (p. 374). Triloknath temple is situated at a distance of about 57 km from Tandi, not at the confluence of the two rivers, as pointed out by Horne.
80. So far the most comprehensive study on the vase has been done by O.C. *Ganguly in an article*, 'An Early Indian Coppper Loṭā in the British Museum', *Rupam*, nos 27–8, July–October 1926, pp. 78–86, pls I and II. Ganguly has, however, dated it to the first century BC; also see Benjamin Rowland Jr., *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu and Jain* (The Pelican History of Art), Harmondsworth, 1967, p. 65, pl. 193A. The author thanks the Trustees of the British Museum for supplying the photograph of the copper vase.
81. Two other objects which are written in a mixed script consisting of Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī letters are: (i) a Sasanian silver bowl bearing an inscription in two scripts with a scene of hunting of lions. The bowl was found in Swat (*see* G. von Mitterwallner in *Archaeologia*, vol. XII, 1912,

pp. 251–6, pl. XXXVII, fig. 2); (ii) another inscription has been engraved on a semi-precious stone also found in the north-west (*see* B.N. Mukherjee in *Indian Museum Bulletin*, vol. XXV, 1990, pl. 80).

82. The discovery of this inscription at Parwanoo is significant because this place is located at the crossing of important trade routes thus linking the Indian plains with the hills of Himachal Pradesh. The route coming from Kalsi also passed through Parwanoo and was further linked with Pathankot (Pratiṣṭhāna).
83. Vogel in the *Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Northern Circle for the Year ending 31 March 1906*, pp. 2–3.
84. Ibid., p. 36 and *Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Panjab and United Provinces Circle, for the year ending 31 March 1905*, p. 49.
85. Ibid.
86. Cunningham, *ASI*, vol. V, pp. 177–8, pl. XLII, fig. 2.
87. Charles J. Rodgers, *Revised List of Objects of Archaeological Interest in the Panjab*, Lahore, 1891, p. 44.
88. Now in the collection of the Museum of Kangra Art, Dharamsala.
89. *Annual Progress Report of 1905*, p. 49. Among other items purchased for the Lahore Museum was a brass statue of Śākyamuni from the temple of Nandikeśvara (now part of the Chāmuṇḍā temple complex) at Dadh (Kangra district).
90. J.Ph. Vogel, 'Inscribed Brass Statuette from Fatehpur (Kangra)', *ASI AR*, 1904–5, pp. 107–9, pl. XXXV, figs a and b.
91. See T.S. Maxwell, 'Lākhamaṇḍal and Trilokināth: The Transformed Functions of Hindu Architecture in Two Cross-Cultural Zones of the Western Himalaya', *Art International*, vol. XXIV, pts 1–2, 1980, pp. 9–74, pl. 52. There are no similarities of the iconographic details of this statue with those of the Avalokiteśvara image at Triloknāth. I examined this stone statue at the site on 11 October 1998.
92. Penelope Chetwode, 'An Account of the Western Himalayan Bhuṇḍa Ritual in the Sutlej Valley', *Saras Bulletin, Special Pre-Publication Extract*, vol. 4, 1984, pp. 18–19, pls 2 and 3 on pp. 34–5.
93. Mandanjeet Singh, *Himalayan Art*, New York, 1971, p. 116, fig. 34.
94. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, vol. II, p. 475.
95. Ibid.
96. *Gazetteer of Lahul and Spiti*, p. 34.
97. Kenneth Douglas and Gwendolyn Bays (eds), *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava* (*Padma bKa'i Thang*), 2 vols, California, 1978.
98. Toussaint cited in A.I. Vostrikov's, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, tr. H.C. Gupta, Calcutta, 1970, p. 41.
99. Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Pañjab Hill States*, vol. II, p. 475.
100. The canto 9 of the *Padma bka'i Thaṅ* makes interesting reading regarding

the birth of Śāntarakṣita. It adds: 'And there is also the monastery of Uttala, arisen spontaneously, directed by celestial beings. And there is also the Temple of Apparitions and the monastery of Ghandola. Now after *the lord of these places* (italics mine), king Tsugpu Risang, accomplished the act of his desire with queen Chodoma, Worthy of Respect, twin princes were born' (Douglas and Bays, *The Life and Liberation*, vol. I, p. 62). What is clear from the extract quoted above is that the king gTsug-phud Ris-bzaṅ was the lord of the places, including the monastery of Ghandola, i.e. Bodh-gaya.

101. Ibid., vol. II, p. 491.
102. The rock-carvings of Gondla were noticed by Vogel as early as 1902; see *Annual Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey, Panjab Circle for the Year ending 31 March 1902*, p. 3. The central figure of Maitreya measures about 5.20 m.
103. Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, pp. 176–8.
104. Ghaṇṭāpāda was one of the eighty-four Siddhas. On the contribution of the Siddhas in Vajrayāna Buddhism, *see* Rahul Sankrityayana, 'L'origine du Vajrayāna et Les 84 Siddhas', *JA*, vol. CCXXV, October–December 1934, pp. 209–30.
105. rDo-rje tshe-brtan brought out a reproduction of a collection of manuscripts from the Library of dKyil monastery in Spiti, entitled *Collected Biographical Material about Lo-chen Rin-Chen-Bzaṅ-po and his Subsequent Reembodiments*, Delhi, 1977.
106. The third biography in this collection (fols. numbered consecutively 51–128) was written by Gu-ge Khyi thaṅ-pa dPal Ye-śes (fol. 126, l. 5).
107. We refer to the three biographies in this collection as CBM, No. 3 (fols 51–128), CBM, No. 5 (fols 147–229) and CBM, No. 6 (fols 230–277).
108. CBM, No. 3.
109. Ibid., fol. 91, ll. 1-2; CBM, no. 5, fol. 176, l. 4; CBM, no. 6, fol. 239, ll. 4–5.
110. CBM, No. 5, fol. 178, l. 5 says that he brought thirty-three artists.
111. Samten G. Karmay, 'The Ordinance of lHa Bla-ma Ye-shes-'od', in Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (eds), *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 153; *also see* David Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, vol. I, Boston, 1987, pp. 186–7, where a slightly improved translation is given.
112. Also Samten G. Karmay, 'An Open Letter by Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od to the Buddhists of Tibet', *The Tibet Journal*, vol. V, no. 3, 1980, pp. 3–28. The list of works not to be practised appears on pp. 14–17.
113. G.N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, pp. 69–70.
114. Herbert V. Guenther (*The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*, London, 1978, p. viii) has given dates for Nāropa's life span as AD 1016–1100. We, however, follow the suggestion of B.P. Singh ('Nāropā: His Life and

Activities', *JBRS*, vol. LIII, 1961, pp. 117–29), who gives his life span as AD 956–1040.

115. Li An-che, 'The bKah-brgyud Sect of Lamaism', *JAOS*, vol. 69, 1949, pp. 51–9.
116. Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims*, p. 17.
117. Ibid., p. 26.
118. Ibid., p. 18.
119. Ibid., Tibetan text, p. 90.
120. Ibid., p. 92.
121. *See* chapter VI.
122. *Vaiḍūrya ser-po* (*A History of the dGe-lugs-pa Monasteries of Tibet*, 2 parts, Lokesh Chandra (ed.), New Delhi, *1960*, p. *225*. *Also see* Tucci, 'Tibetan Notes', *HJAS*, vol. XII, 1949, pp. 492–3.
123. *Vaiḍūrya ser-po*, p. 223.
124. Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims*, pp. 32–6.
125. Francke, *First Collection*, no. 136, p. 28.
126. Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims*, pp. 65–72.
127. Francke, *First Collection*, no. 137, p. 28.
128. Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims*, p. 72.
129. Snellgrove and Skorupski, *Cultural Heritage*, vol. II, pp. 4, 34.
130. Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims*, p. 71.
131. Francke, *First Collection*, p. 24.
132. G. Tucci and E. Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet: Being the Chronicle of the Tucci Scientific Expedition to Western Tibet (1933)*, tr. M. A. Johnstone, London and Glasgow, 1935, pp. 43–4.



III

The Architectural Emplacement

The Tabo monastic complex encompasses nine temples (*lha-khaṅs*) constructed over a period of nine hundred years from *c.* AD 996 to 1908 (Pls V–VI). The story of its evolution is not only perplexing but also amazingly confusing and intricate for want of definite records. No *mahātmya* or pilgrim's account helps us in unfolding its architectural history to ascertain an evolutionary sequence. This chapter specifically addresses the question of the evolution of the complex, to differentiate the several phases of construction. To establish a reliable progression of expansion until 1908, it is important to know the typology of Buddhist monasteries in Himachal Pradesh.

TYPES OF BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN HIMACHAL

Buddhist structures were excluded from an earlier study in which we classified the temples of Himachal.[1] In this context we attempt a broad categorization of the Buddhist monasteries. This classification is not based strictly on geographic distribution or sectarian affiliations (Fig. 4). The type of building material available and the varying climatic conditions within Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur influenced the architectural styles of monastic buildings. The Buddha himself allowed monks five kinds of abodes (*pañca senāsalāni* or *senāleṇāni:*[2] *vihāra, aḍḍhyoga, pāsāda, hammiya and guhā*. The *Cullavaga* narrates an interesting story of a *seṭṭhi* of Rājagaha who constructed sixty *vihāras* within a day for the Bhikkhus. The Buddha thanked the merchant for his generosity and declared that *vihāradānam sanghasya aggaṁ*, i.e. 'the gift of a *vihāra* to the Sangha is the chief gift'.[3] Thereafter, the history of the evolution of a *leṇa* (Aśokan *kubha*) has several phases. The five kinds of dwellings

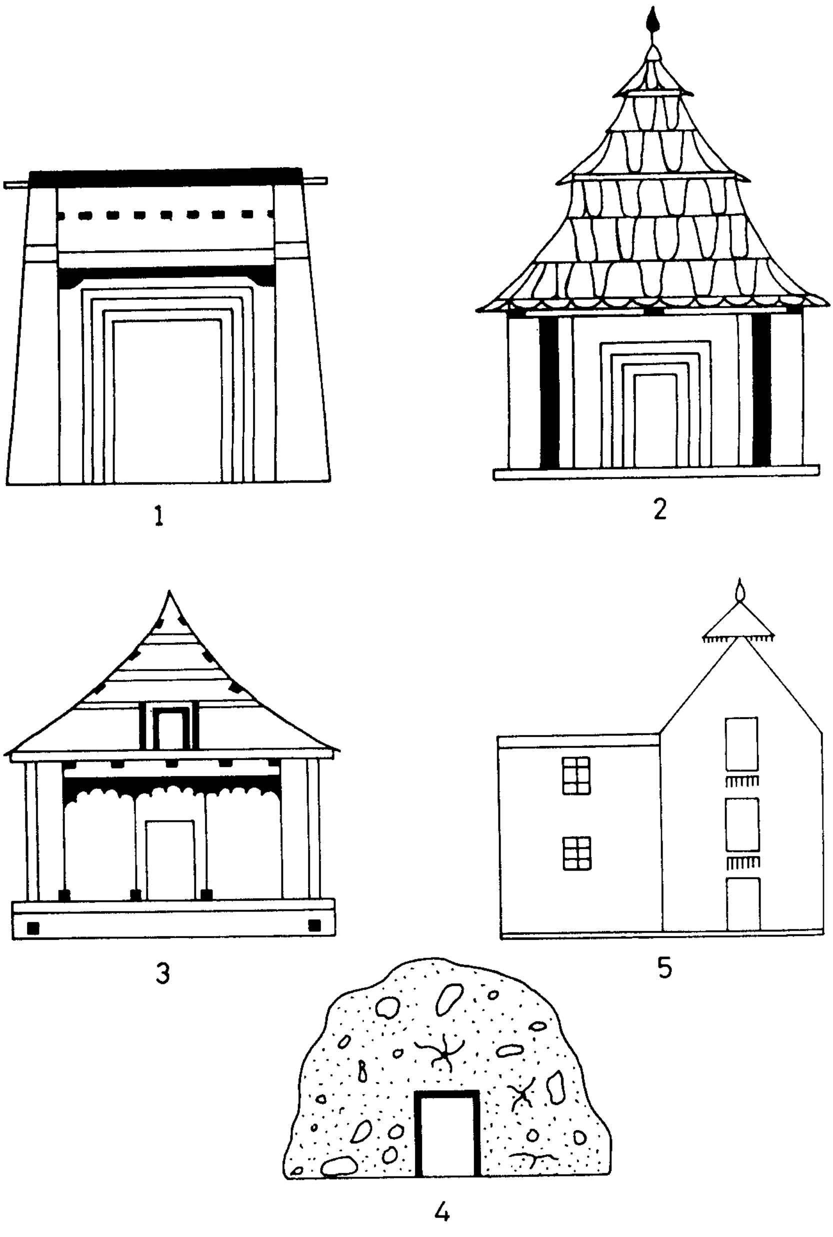


Fig. 4 Some basic types of Buddhist monasteries in Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur (H.P.)

recommended by the Buddha were applicable to Bihar, Bengal and the Gangetic doab. However, these dwellings did not survive for a long period. The *vihāra* and *guhā* became much more practical and popular amongst the Buddhist community of India.

Several *guhā* (cave) monasteries dedicated to the Ājivikās were be excavated by Aśoka in Barbara and Nagarjuni hills in Bihar. The western-Indian Hīnayāna monasteries at Bhaja, Kondone, Pital-khora, Ajanta (no. 10), Bedsa (no. 9), Nasik and Karli show the second phase of evolution.[4] Some of them possessed a vestibule (*antarāla*) which opened into the square cell which accommodated a *caitya* or *stūpa*. With the deification of the Buddha as a personal saviour in the second century AD, images of Buddha, either empanelled or canopied, started appearing. The Mahayȧna monasteries of Gandhara developed two distinct structures: the *stūpa* and the *sanghārāma* or quarters for the monks. These structures consisted of a stone masonry sometimes mixed with wood.

The Buddhist monasteries of Himachal Pradesh belong to a *vihāra*-type because no rock-cut monastery has been discovered so far. Some cave-type cells scooped in the northern hill at Tabo are not rock-cut monasteries in the strict sense, but one of them contains a proper hall (*maṇḍapa*) and murals on the walls discussed in Appendix II. The categorization given below is based on the field surveys carried out in the preceding decade in the trans-Himalayan zone (Fig. 4).

1. The flat-roofed monasteries either single or double-storeyed are found in the largest number in Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Ladakh. The walls are made of sun-dried bricks or sometimes of stone masonry. All temples of the monastic complex at Tabo belong to this type. This type of architecture is most suitable for the dry climatic conditions prevailing in the region. Such monasteries possess two types of plans: square and rectangular. Some notable examples are: gSer-khaṅ, Lha-lung; Kha-che lha-khaṅ and bKa'-'gyur lha-khaṅ, Kanam; four temples of the Nako monastic complex and the Padmasambhava temple, Nako; the rÑiṅ-ma-pa monasteries at Leo and Kungri; the Sa-skya-pa temple, Tengyud and the Zhabs-rjes lha-khaṅ, Kardang.
2. The pagoda type monasteries are common in those areas where deodar wood was available in plenty. This type of structure shares the architectural features of the pagoda temples found in Kinnaur, Simla, Kulu and Mandi districts respectively.[5] A few surviving examples of this type are located at Chitkul,

Tsarang, Thangi, Ribba, Sangla, Kanam (all in Kinnaur) and Ghandhola in Lahaul. The pagoda-tiered roof of the Ghandhola monastery seems to be a recent addition. It is roofed now by corrugated iron sheets.

3. The smallest number are the pent-roofed monasteries found in Kinnaur where they share their architectural features with the pent-roofed temples found in almost every part of Himachal. The Mone lha-khaṅ, Kamru̥ and the Buddhist monastery at Lippa are a few examples of this style.
4. As pointed out earlier no rock-cut monastery has been found in Himachal. However, several natural cave grottoes have been used by rÑiṅ-ma-pa and bKa'-rgyud-pa followers for performing yogic exercises and meditation. Of the series of caves excavated in the hill at Tabo, one preserves murals on its walls. If a *guhā* is, as explained by Buddhaghosa a 'hutment made of bricks or scooped out of rock or made of wood or laterite (*paṁsu*)'[6], then the cave monastery of Tabo would fall in this category. The use of the Tibetan *brag phug* (a cave) and *grub phug* (cave of the Siddha) for the monastic cell at Tabo suggests that it would not be inappropriate to call it a cave monastery.
5. The last category contains a mixed type of monastic structures, either double or multi-storeyed, which have undergone considerable changes through renovation. Some of them have mixed types of roofs—flat roofs and pent roofs—or a combination of both. The bKra-śis chu-gliṅ monastery, Shashur, and 'Grag-rgyas chos-gliṅ, Kardang are two examples of this type.

AN ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

A.H. Francke, the German archaeologist, as far back as 1909, was the first explorer who brought to light the hidden treasures of Tabo. His seven-page account needs to be re-evaluated since our understanding of Buddhist art has increased manifold.[7] A detailed layout of the monastery, spotted with several temples (*lha-khaṅs and stūpas*), each captioned with a Tibetan script and their English transcriptions, helps us considerably to trace major additions which have been made within the sacred enclave since 1909. Giuseppe Tucci re-surveyed it in 1933 and the results were incorporated in his *Indo-Tibetica*.[8] Tucci has tried to show several lacunae in the plan prepared earlier by Francke. Tucci says, 'On comparing the

layout of the buildings to the ground plan . . . , I realised that this was not accurate and consequently I asked Ghersi to prepare a new one . . . the temples are not seven as Francke says, but eight; it is probable that Francke did not see the large temple of hbrom-ston which is to the left of the Gtsug-lag-khaṅ.'[9] This is not correct because Francke also described eight temples; however, neither of them saw the mGon-khaṅ, the temple of the tutelary deity. David L. Snellgrove and Romi Khosla have also made their assessment of Tabo; the former in the context of evaluating the contribution of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po juxtaposed in the socio-religious milieu of the Gu-ge kingdom during the tenth and eleventh centuries.[10] Romi Khosla has prepared a detailed layout of the buildings situated within the complex in the 1970s.[11] M.N. Deshpande also visited the complex in 1965 and preliminary results were published by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in 1973.[12] A pertinent question which remains unanswered in the works referred to above is whether the entire complex was built in AD 996 or 1042, or constructed over a long period of time. Can different parts of the monastic complex be accurately dated? The focus of this chapter is to secure an answer to these questions and establish an evolutionary sequence and authentic chronology.

The complex has eight chapels (Pl. VI) within the mud-and-stone walls (*lcags-ri*), and the entrance of the ninth temple touches the western boundary wall; its portico, however, falls well within the sacred enclave. The entire complex is dotted with twenty-three *mchod-rtens* (*stūpas*). It is interesting to note that no *mchod-rten* has been added within the complex since Francke's times. Khosla's plan shows the existence of only eighteen *mchod-rtens*. Thus he omitted the location of *stūpa* numbers 3, 7, 14, 21 and 23.[13] A kitchen has been constructed adjacent to *stūpa* number 5 since 1977. Without describing each *lha-khaṅ* systematically it would not be possible to construct a coherent history of the evolution of the complex. The gTsug-lag-khaṅ is the earliest and the dKar-'byuṅ the latest, excluding the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ which seems to have been constructed only a century earlier, that is, by the end of the nineteenth century. How a single temple founded by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po, grew into an important centre of western-Himalayan culture, preserving an almost unbreakable history of Buddhist heritage during the last ten centuries, is an amazing and scintillating account.

The entire compound is located within a *lcags-ri* having unequal walls; the eastern wall measuring 76.43 m up to the corner of the kitchen; the northern wall measuring 97.11 m including 11.53 m lateral extension on the western side; the southern wall measuring 97.06 m,

including 2.82 m extension near *stūpa* number 23, and the western wall measuring 80.38 m which also includes a 2.40 m projection on the south. The north and south walls are almost equal, but there is a difference of 65 cm to 85 cm between the east and west walls. The enclave is approached from the east through a 2 m-wide door. Its orientation is not exactly opposite the door of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. A shopping complex and two other residential houses share their western walls with the eastern boundary wall. (In 1995, a huge two-storeyed Rin-chen bzaṅ-po Sarai was constructed along the eastern wall by demolishing a shopping complex and residential houses.) These houses do not figure in the plans prepared earlier by Francke and Tucci; however, a house (number A in our plan) came up by 1977. On the eastern side of house number A, a 1.4 m-wide passage leads to the kitchen as well as to the complex. The following *lha-khaṅs* exist within the enclosure: (1) gTsug-lag-khaṅ, (2) Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, (3) 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba, (4) gSer-gyi-lha-khaṅ, (5) dKyil-khaṅ, (6) mGon-khaṅ, (7) 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po, (8) rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ; and the ninth chapel, that is dKar-'byuṅ's sanctum falls outside the western wall (Fig. 5) An architectural survey would be of vital importance to distinguish the details of one phase from another.

GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ (THE *VIHĀRA*)

The gTsug-lag-khaṅ is undoubtedly the earliest *vihāra* and can be dated to AD 996. It consists of three parts: a *mukha-maṇḍapa* (vestibule), a *maṇḍapa* (hall) and a *garbhagṛha* (sanctum) with an unequal space for circumambulation (Fig. 6). Now the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ obstructs the east facing entrance to the *mukha-maṇḍapa* (sGo-khaṅ) which measures 7.4 m by 2.55 m. The vestibule preserves the murals of several *dge-sloṅs* and other historical personages along with Tibetan inscriptions, discussed in chapters V and VII, respectively. The assembly hall ('Du-khaṅ) measures 12.42 m by 10.68 m. The height of the ceiling is 4.52 m and supported by sixteen wooden pillars, ten square and six round; the latter are arranged along the northern and southern walls. Quite close to the fourth row of the pillars is a four-bodied statue of Vairocana (rNam-par snaṅ-mdzad; ht. 1.25 m) on a round pedestal (ht. 1.68 m) The hall opens out into an inner chamber which enshrines Amitābha ('Od-dpag-med; ht. 1.56 m) on a lion-throne. On either side of him stand the statues of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta on half-circled pedestals. The *garbhagṛha* (Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ) is almost square,

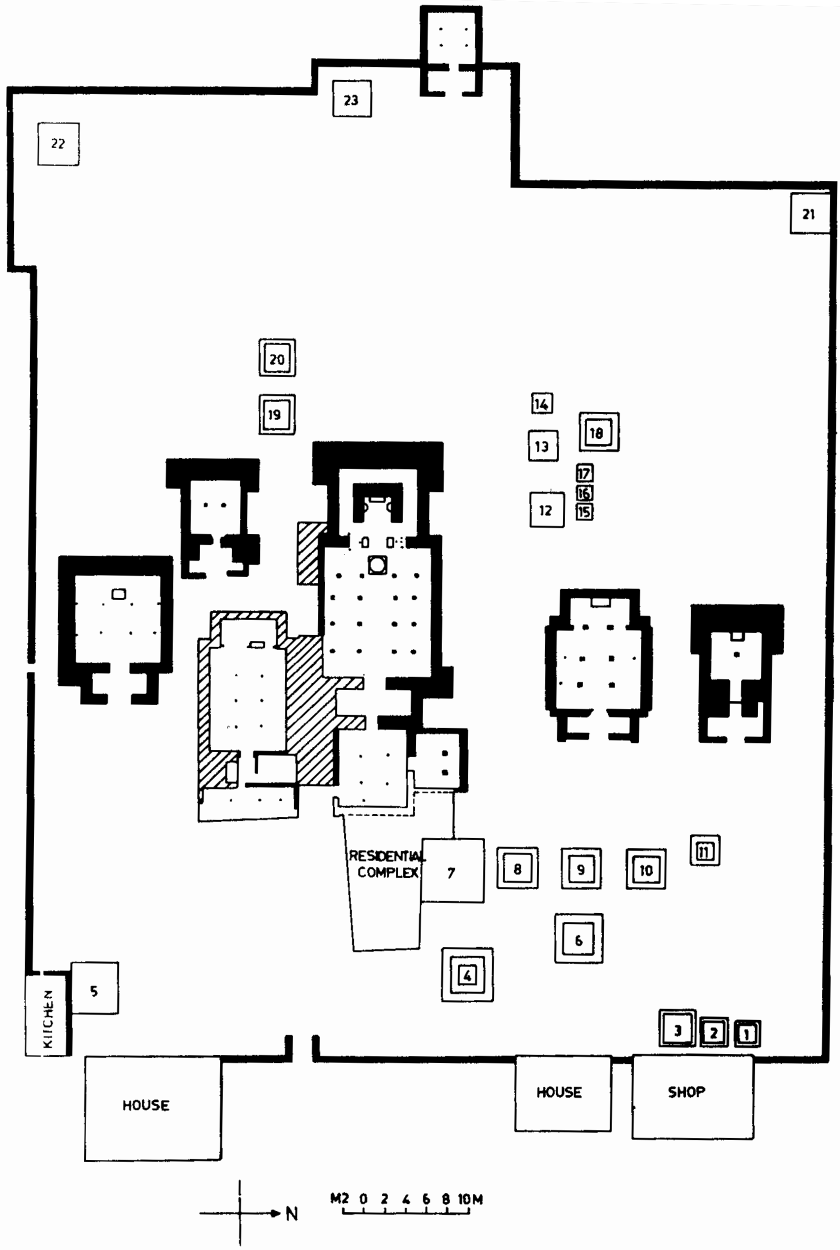


Fig. 5 Ground plan of Tabo monastery, Lahaul-Spiti (H.P.)

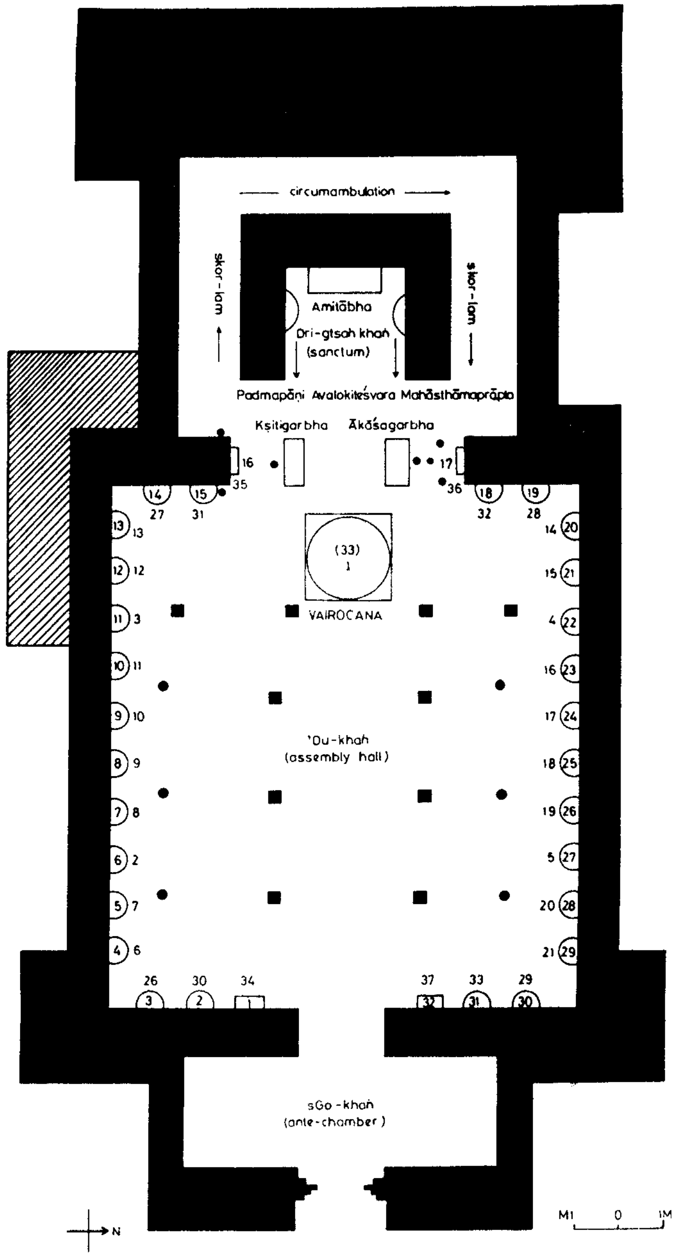


Fig. 6 Ground plan of gTsug-lag-khaṅ, Tabo *chos-'khor*

measuring 2.6 m by 2.56 m. The width of its walls varies from 92 cm to 98 cm. The circumambulation (*skor-lam*) measures 7.67 m by 6.48 m.

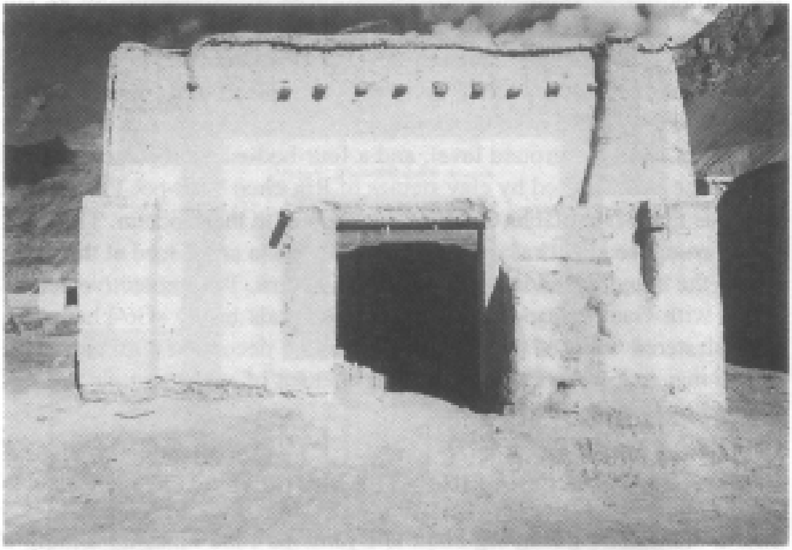
The gTsug-lag-khaṅ contains several clay statues which can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of thirty-three statues: thirty-two are placed high up on the walls of the 'Du-khaṅ at the height of 1.65 m from the ground level, and a four-bodied Vairocana at the far end of the hall, flanked by clay statues of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po. The second group is that of Amitābha and his two acolytes in the sanctum. The third group composed of Ākaśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha are placed at the point where the *maṇḍapa* ends and the sanctum begins. Two protective deities along with Gaṇeśa stand on the raised pedestals in the sGo-khaṅ. The clay-plastered walls of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ are decorated with narrative, devotional and historical murals. The themes of many murals are explained by Tibetan inscriptions.[14]

BYAMS-PA'I LHA-KHAṄ (THE MAITREYA'S TEMPLE)

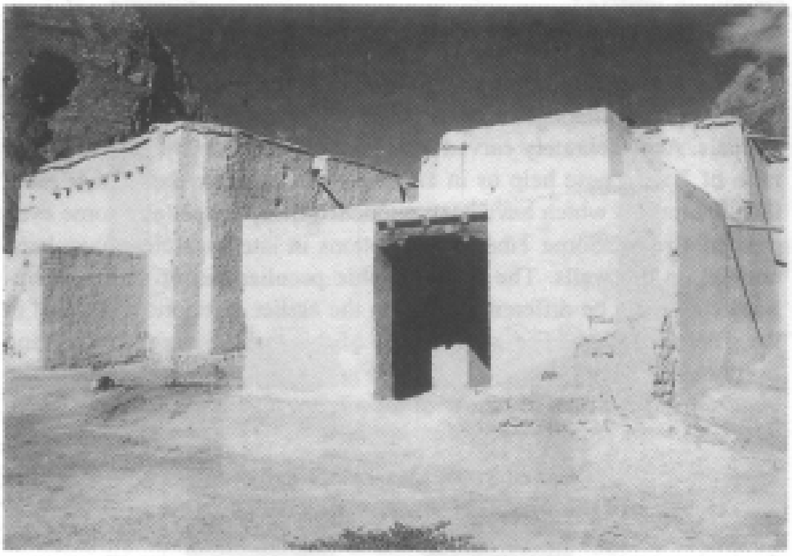
To the left of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ is Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ enshrining a clay statue of Byams-pa (Maitreya; ht. *c.* 5.55 m) in *pralāmba-pāda-mudrā*. The temple has three parts: the vestibule (5.96 m by 1.68 m), the hall (7.95 m by 7.75 m) and a sanctum measuring 5.60 m by 2.74 m (Pl. VII). The ceiling (ht. 5.74 m) is supported by eleven pillars, eight being square and three round. The three round pillars seem to have been added at a later period as their placement is not in conformity with the earlier square pillars. The stone-bases of the columns are carved with animals. An elaborately carved wooden door (0.82 m by 1.64 m) has a ratio of 1 : 2. These help us in arriving at an accurate date rather more than the murals which have been retouched many times (and some even painted afresh). Some Tibetan inscriptions in late characters have been noticed on the walls. The palaeographic peculiarities of these inscriptions can easily be differentiated from the earlier inscriptions noticed in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The ground plan of this temple is very interesting from an architectural point of view (Fig. 7) for it possesses *karṇa* and *bhadra* proliferations like those of the *nāgara* temples in northern India.

'BROM-STON LHA-KHAṄ CHUṄ-BA (THE SMALLER TEMPLE OF 'BROM-STON)

A close contemporary of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ is the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. It is approached through a 1.8 m-wide entrance which



Pl. VII Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ's facade



Pl. VIII 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba before the construction of cement and stone walls by the ASI

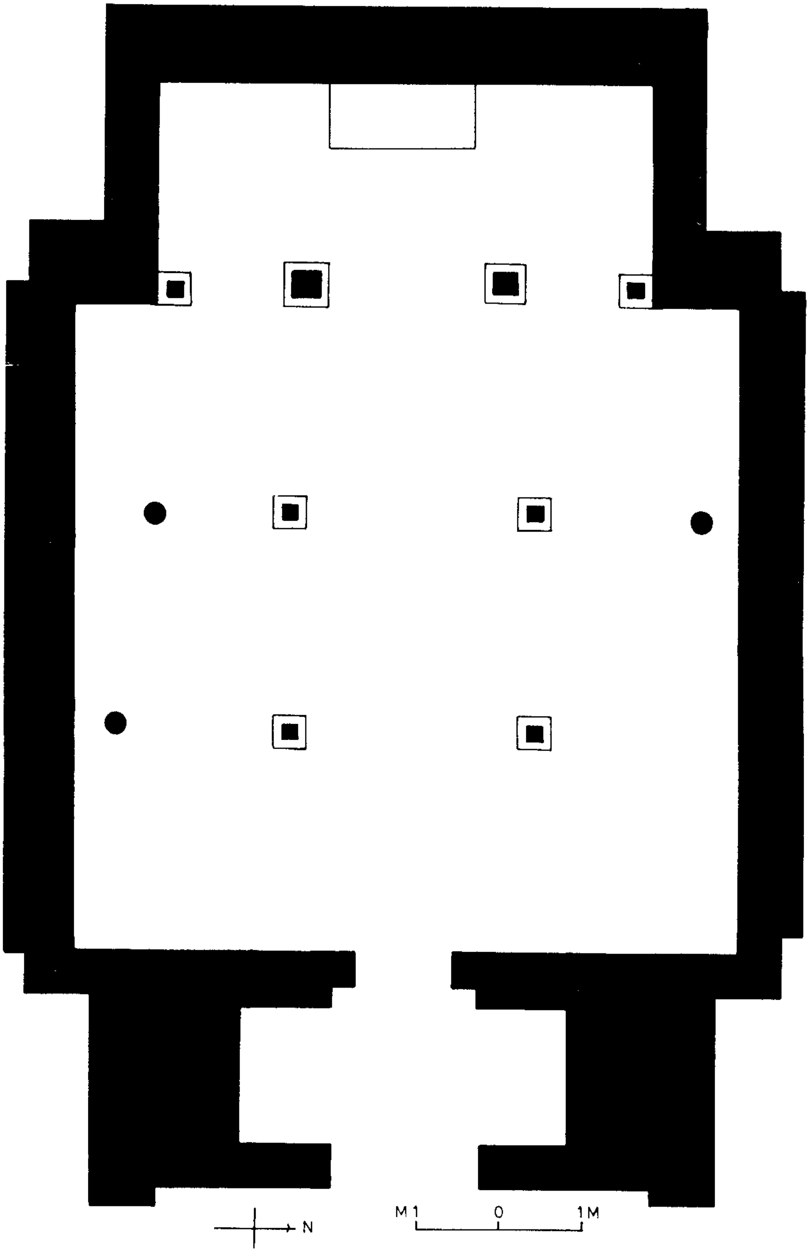


Fig. 7 Ground plan of Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ

forms an L-shaped vestibule (Pl. VIII). Excluding a curve along the north wall it measures 5.62 m by 1.94 m. The entrance to the sanctum is through a 1.28 m-wide and 3.58 m-long tunnel like passage. It is divided into two parts by a wooden door (65 cm by 1.30 m) constructed in a ratio of 1 : 2. Substantial renovations have been made to the wall decorations. The shrine has been dedicated to 'Brom-ston (AD 1005–64) who was a direct disciple of Atīśa and founded the bKa'-gdams-pa school in Tibet. The layout of the outer western wall is identical to that of the wall of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ (Fig. 8). The ceiling (ht. 4.96 m) is supported by a single pillar. The four sides of the stone base have carvings of elephants.

GSER-GYI-LHA-KHAṄ (THE GOLDEN TEMPLE)

Situated to the left of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, the gSer lha-khaṅ has two parts: the vestibule measuring 5.52 m by 2 m, and the sanctum, 8.15 m by 8.30 m (Fig. 9). The height of the ceiling is 5.30 m and it is supported by eight pillars. Four of these pillars along the north and south walls have been added to reduce the pressure of the ceiling. A pedestal measuring 1.15 m by 1.05 m has been constructed at a distance of 1.38 m from the western wall. The outer walls, especially the western and the southern, have been provided the additional support of sifted clay (1.70 m-wide clay wall on the west and .0.7 m- to 0.9 m-wide wall on the south). The removal of these walls by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1991–92 is tantamount to a 'Himalayan blunder' for the ASI totally ignored the local architectural needs (Pl. IX). The main functional value of such walls was to prevent seepage of water at the ground level and keep water off the walls. Tabo is situated in a seismic-prone zone. The frequent occurrence of earthquakes in this belt might cause considerable damage to newly-constructed masonry walls. There is an increasing possibility of seepage of water through big cracks in the walls. We noticed some moisture on the interior side of the south wall of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ in 1993 and 1994. The murals of the Sudhana story on that section of the wall have already suffered to such an extent that neither the murals nor the accompanying inscriptions are visible. Similar moisture has been noticed on the south wall of the gSer-khaṅ, and the north wall of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba.

DKYIL-KHAṄ (THE *MAṆḌALA* TEMPLE)

Another temple in the complex, whose sanctum is almost parallel to the

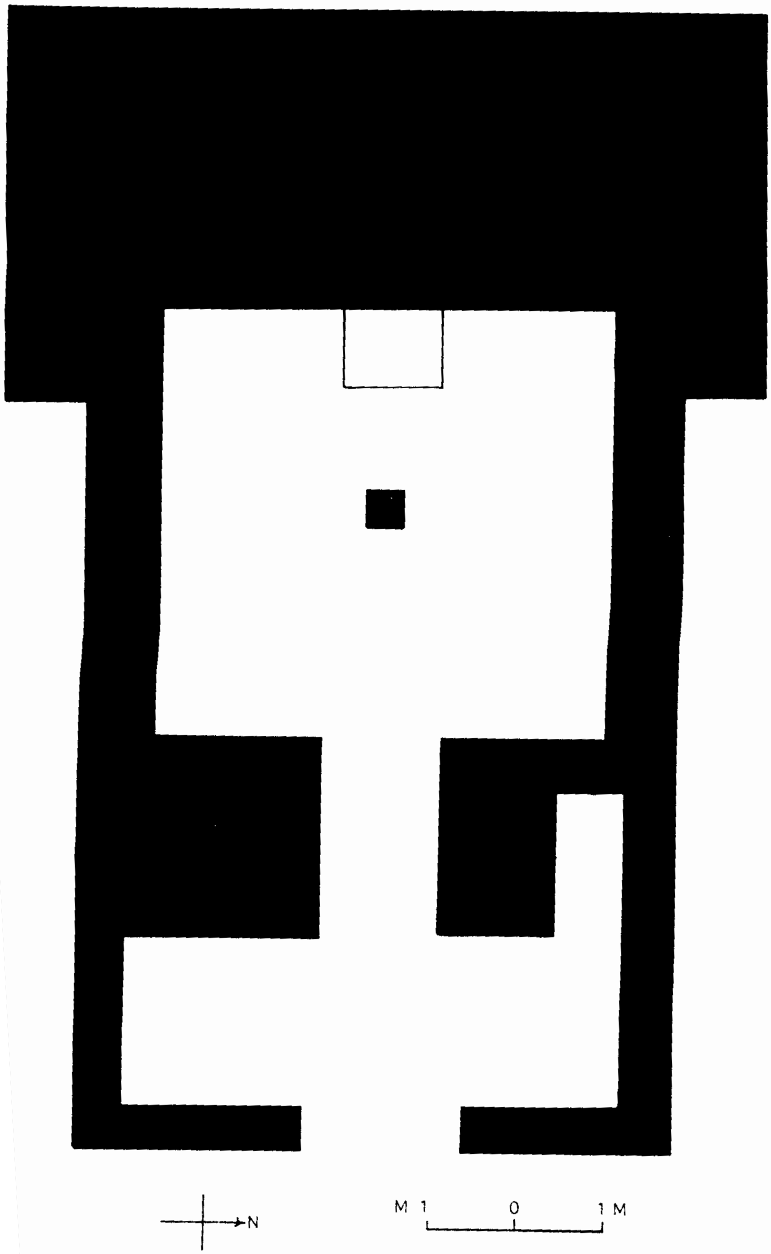


Fig. 8 Ground plan of 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba

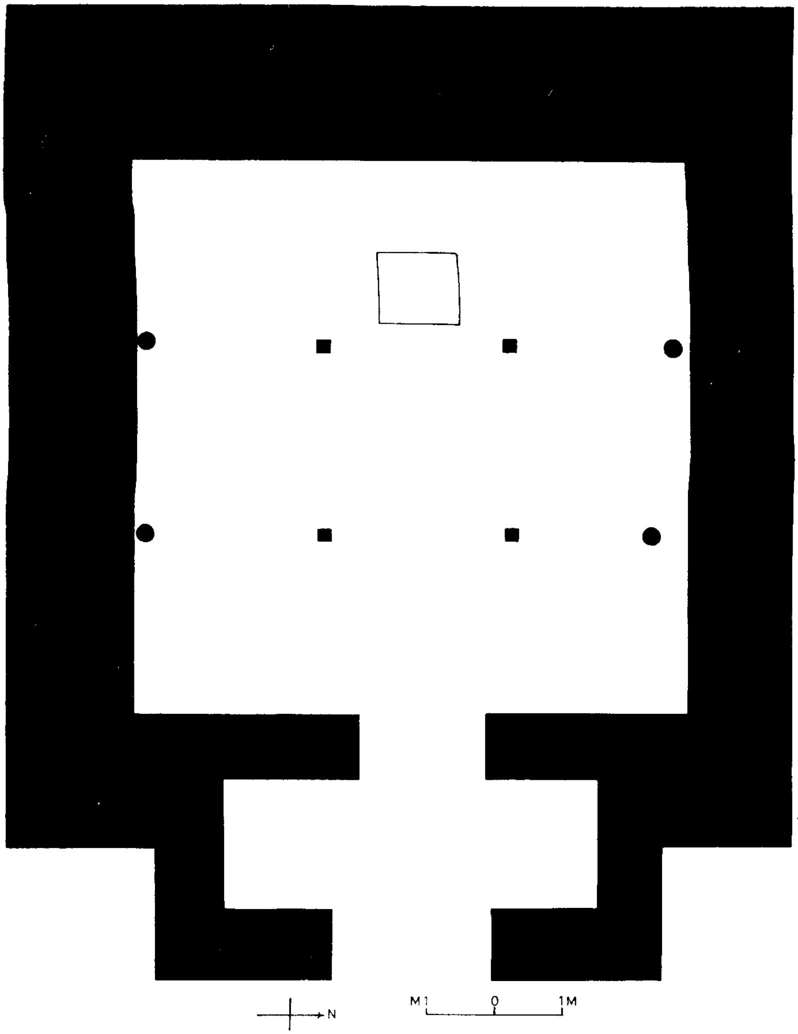


Fig. 9 Ground plan of gSer-gyi-lha-khaṅ



Pl. IX gSer-khaṅ and 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po

sanctum of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, is dKyil-khaṅ (Fig. 10). It has two parts: the vestibule which does not figure in the drawings of Francke, Tucci and Khosla; and a square sanctum measuring 5.22 m across. The ceiling (ht. 4.57 m) is supported by two pillars (not four as shown by Khosla and Klimburg-Salter).[15]

As the name of the temple suggests it is a *maṇḍala*-hall, and three of its walls are decorated with *maṇḍalas*. There are several historical inscriptions on the north and south walls. What interests us here are the plans of the Tabo and Tholing monasteries whose identification has been possible from the Tibetan inscriptions which accompany these illustrations. The inscription on the left side (north wall) reads: *tho-gliṅ gser-khaṅ gi dkod-pa,*[16] i.e. 'the plan of the gSer-khaṅ of Tho-gliṅ'. Another inscription on the same panel on the right reads: *ta-po rgyan gyi gtsug-lag-khaṅ gi 'kod-pa*, i.e. 'the plan of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, the ornament of Tapo (Tabo)'. The names of the following temples are legible in the Tabo plan: 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ, obviously referring to the smaller temple of 'Brom-ston, Byams khaṅ, gSer-khaṅ and the dKar-chuṅ ('byuṅ).

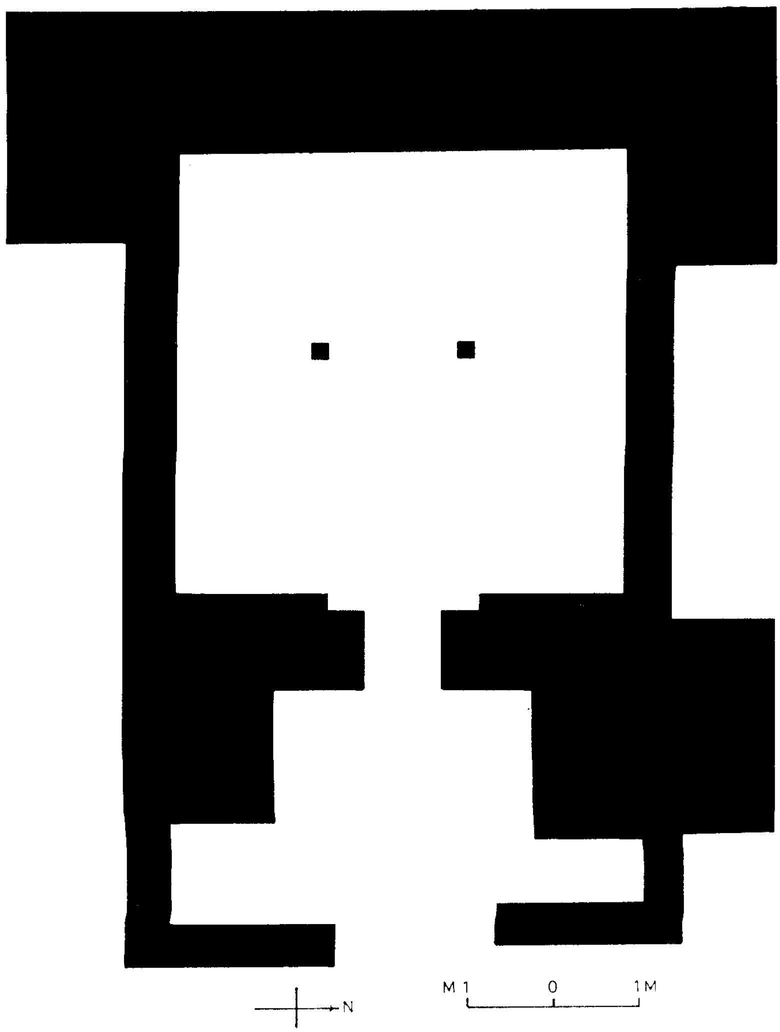


Fig. 10 Ground plan of dKyil-khaṅ

The occurrence of these names raises an important question: were all these temples in existence when the dKyil-khaṅ was constructed? We shall return to answer this question later when we establish an evolutionary sequence.

MGON-KHAṄ (THE TEMPLE OF THE TUTELARY DEITY)

The mGon-khaṅ seems to have been constructed much earlier than the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. Neither Francke nor Tucci appears to have noticed this shrine as no account of it figures in their writings. The door measuring 0.68 m by 1.30 m is south-oriented and can be entered through the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ. The rectangular sanctum measures 5.30 m by 4.32 m (one wall measures 5.48 m), and its ceiling (ht. 3.26 m) is supported by two wooden pillars. At present, this shrine is considered the most sacred chamber by the Buddhist community of Tabo. On the walls have been painted numerous tutelary deities such as rDo-rje 'Jigs-byed, rDo-rje chen-mo, Lha-mo and several forms of the mGon-po. Several masks and a metal statue of the late head-lama of this monastery, gSer-skong Rinpoche, who died at Kibbar on 28 August 1993, are also stored in the sanctum.

'BROM-STON LHA-KHAṄ CHEN-PO (THE LARGER TEMPLE OF 'BROM-STON)

The 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po is the second largest temple in the complex (Pl. IX). Its layout resembles that of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. Half of its vestibule is covered by a store-room and the other half is on the left by the stairs which lead to the upper storey. The hall measures 10.05 m by 7.37 m and a cella beyond it measures 5.65 m by 2.40 m. Three pillars have been provided at a terminus where the cella begins. Thus the ceiling (ht. 5.26 m) is supported by a total number of nine pillars. A small pedestal (1.18 m by 0.61 m) is constructed near the central pillar which precede the sanctum. The north and south walls are decorated with murals of sMan-bla (the medicine Buddhas), four on the south wall and four on the north wall, whereas Amitābha, flanked by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, appears on the western wall. Several Tibetan inscriptions in cursive writing have survived on the south and north walls of the *maṇḍapa*, explaining the twelve acts of the Buddha.

dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ (The White Temple)

The drawings of the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ earlier prepared by Francke, Tucci and Khosla indicate that it did not originally possess a vestibule but now it falls within the boundary wall and measures 5.2 m by 2 m. Its sanctum has been raised on a plinth which falls beyond the boundary wall (Fig. 11). It measures 5.20 m by 4.68 m and the ceiling (ht. 2.74 m) is supported by four wooden pillars. Some of the murals painted on the walls have been destroyed by percolating water through the seeping roofs. The surviving murals include the representations of Śākyamuni, Tsoṅ-kha-pa along with his two disciples, and eight medicine Buddhas.

rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ (The Temple of the Master)

Lastly, the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ, which represents the last phase of architectural development at Tabo. Tucci has called this temple the sGo-khaṅ (the entrance temple) which can easily be confused with the sGo-khaṅ (*mukha-maṇḍapa*) of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. It is preferable to call it rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ because a large mural of Tsoṅ-kha-pa is painted on the western wall. He is popularly known in Tibet as rJe-bla-ma (the master or lord; Sanskrit *bhaṭṭāraka*). The Buddhist community of Tabo also calls it by the Tibetan name, i.e. rJe-bla-ma.

It shares its north wall with the mGon-khaṅ and the west wall with the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The hall measures 7.55 m by 6.40 m. There are some variations in the measurements of the south and the north walls. The north wall measures 7.55 m and the south wall measures 7.60 m. The south-oriented door measures 0.6 m by 1.17 m. The roof (ht. 2.45 m) and an upper storey are supported by five round pillars. It also displays several inscriptions, written very recently, which are only of iconographic interest.

The correct and accurate measurement data presented above and tabulated in Table 2 are crucial for understanding the architectural history of the Tabo monastery. A comparison of the specific measurements of each temple with the measurements taken earlier by Francke, Deshpande, Khosla and Klimburg-Salter show wide variations. With the exception of Khosla, other scholars have concentrated primarily on the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. We would like to draw the reader's attention to columns 2 to 7 of each temple mentioned. The variation in our measurements with those of Khosla's is as much as from 2 cm to 95 cm. The possibility of measurement variations is not unlikely on the exterior side because

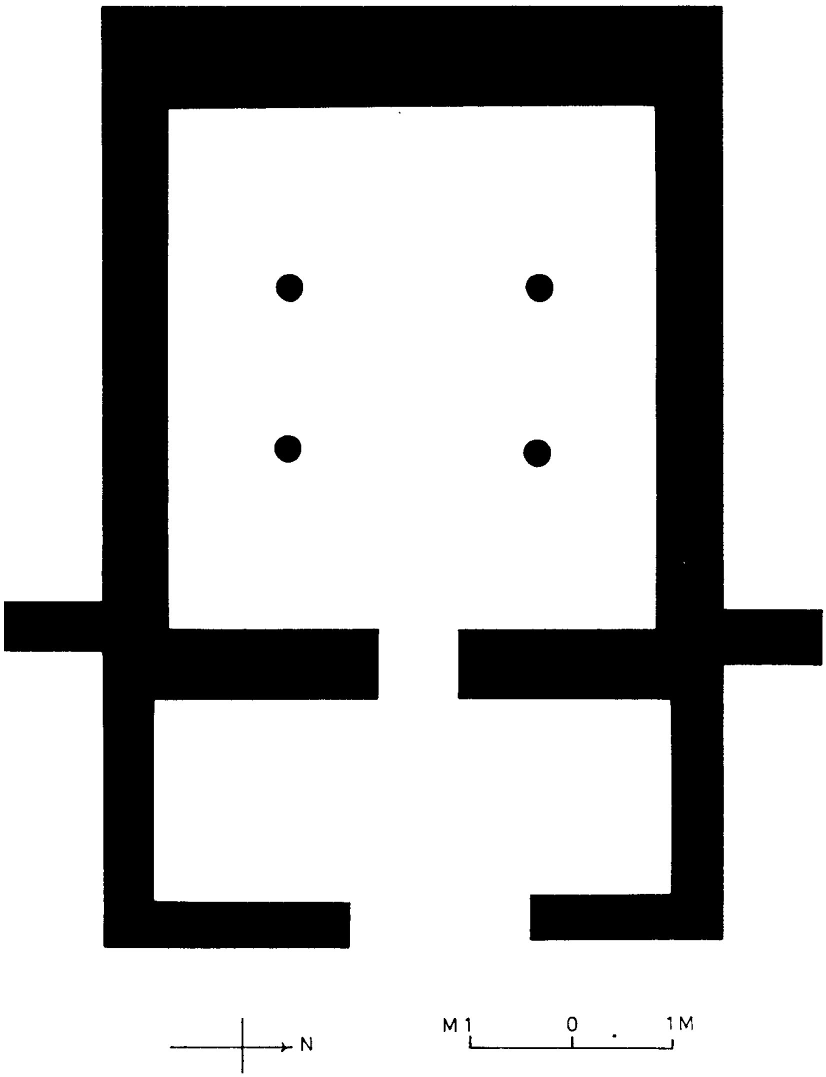


Fig. 11 Ground plan of dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ

TABLE 2
Specific measurement data on Tabo Monastery

Name of the Lha-khaṅ	Resear-cher	Sanctum	Hall	Circum-ambulation	Portico	Door	Height
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I. gTsug-lag-khaṅ	A.	×	63′.14″ × 34′.10″	×	×	×	×
	B.	×	63′ × 34′	×	×	×	×
	C.	2.4 × 2.2 m	12.4 m × 10.9 m	×	×	×	×
	D.	×	40″ × 36″	×	×	×	
	E.	2.60 m × 2.56 m	12.42 m × 10.68 m	7.67 m × 6.48 m	7.40 m × 2.55 m	1.08 m × 1.81 m	4.52 m
II. Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	B.	×	×	–	×	×	6.0 m
	C.	2.7 m × 6.2 m	8.3 m × 7.6 m	–	×	×	×
	E.	2.72 m × 5.60 m	7.95 m × 7.75 m	–	5.96 m × 1.68 m	.82 m × 1.64 m	5.74 m
III. 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba	C.	4.7 m × 5.1 m	–	–	×	×	×
	E.	4.76 m × 5.25 m	–	–	5.62 m × 1.94 m	.65 m × 1.30 m	4.96 m
IV. gSer-gyi-lha-khaṅ	C.	8.2 m × 8.2 m	–	–	×	×	5.8 m
	E.	8.15 m × 8.30 m	–	–	5.52 m × 2.00 m	.86 m × 1.57 m	5.30 m

V.	dKyil-khaṅ	C.	5.0 m × 5.0 m	–	–	×	×	4.5 m
		E.	5.22 m × 5.22 m	–	–	5.50 m × S 1.25 m N .72 m	.68 m × 1.35 m	4.57 m
VI.	mGon-khaṅ	C.	4.8 m × 4.2 m	–	–	–	×	×
		E.	5.30 m × 4.32 m	–	–	–	.68 m × 1.30 m	3.26 m
VII.	'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ	C.	2.7 m × 5.4 m	10.0 m × 7.3 m	–	–	×	×
	chen-po	E.	2.68 m × 5.65 m	10.05 m × 7.37 m	–	–	.72 m × 1.66 m	5.26 m
VIII.	dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ	C.	5.1 m × 4.7 m	–	–	×	×	2.7 m
		E.	5.20 m × 4.68 m	–	–	5.20 m × 2.0 m	.63 m × 1.14 m	2.74 m
IX.	rJe bla-ma lha-khaṅ	C.	6.6 m × 6.0 m	–	–	–	×	×
		E.	7.55 m × 6.40 m	–	–	–	.60 m × 1.17 m	2.45 m

× = measurement not taken
– = does not exist

A. A.H. Francke
B. M.N. Deshpande
C. Romi Khosla
D. Deborah K. Salter
E. The present author

the clay walls have been renovated and plastered from time to time. There is, however, no scope for tampering with the interior walls for each wall is profusely decorated with murals. The wrong measurement given by Khosla has resulted possibly from two factors: (i) the measurements were not taken at the ground level from corner to corner, and (ii) there is also the possibility of misreading the measurements in complete darkness by Khosla and his associates.

AN EVOLUTIONARY SEQUENCE AND PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

PHASE I

The gTsug-lag-khaṅ, along with its architectural components, Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (*garbhagṛha*) and 'Du-khaṅ (*maṇḍapa*) was built by the *lha-bla-ma* Ye-śes-'od in AD 996. Exactly, forty-six years later (*lo bzhi-bcu-rtsa-drug*), the *lha-btsun-pa* Byaṅ-chub-'od, 'having seen that temple made by the grandfather [Ye-śes-'od] has become old, (thus) called together artisans', and thus 'this temple was repaired' (*gtsug-lag-khaṅ 'di gso'-ba mdzad-de*).[17] Fortunately, the very first line of the inscription on the left wall of the sanctum begins with a date, i.e. *spre'u'i lo* (monkey's year). Now the problem is to find an equivalent year in the Christian era for monkey's year. The question becomes further complicated in the absence of an element normally associated with an animal in the Tibetan calendar. Nevertheless, the sequence of events described in the biography of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po helps us to solve the riddle and we arrive at a date, AD 996. This would imply that the repairs or substantial reconstruction work was carried out in AD 1042. Dīpaṅkar Śrījñāna (Atīśa) also visited the Gu-ge kingdom in the same year. It seems very likely that the gTsug-lag-khaṅ was repaired before Atīśa's arrival in Tholing since Byaṅ-chub-'od was personally present to receive him there as the biography of Atīśa written by 'Brom-ston would have us believe. With the exception of minor retouchings and repairs both in the murals and clay sculptures done at a later period all decorations in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ seem to have been completed by AD 1042 (Fig. 12).

Some doubts have been expressed by scholars regarding the date of Amitābha and the four Bodhisattvas placed in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. We do not think that Vairocana once occupied a place where Amitābha has been placed. That would imply that the western wall of the sanctum on which the cycle of the Thousand Buddhas has been painted did not exist

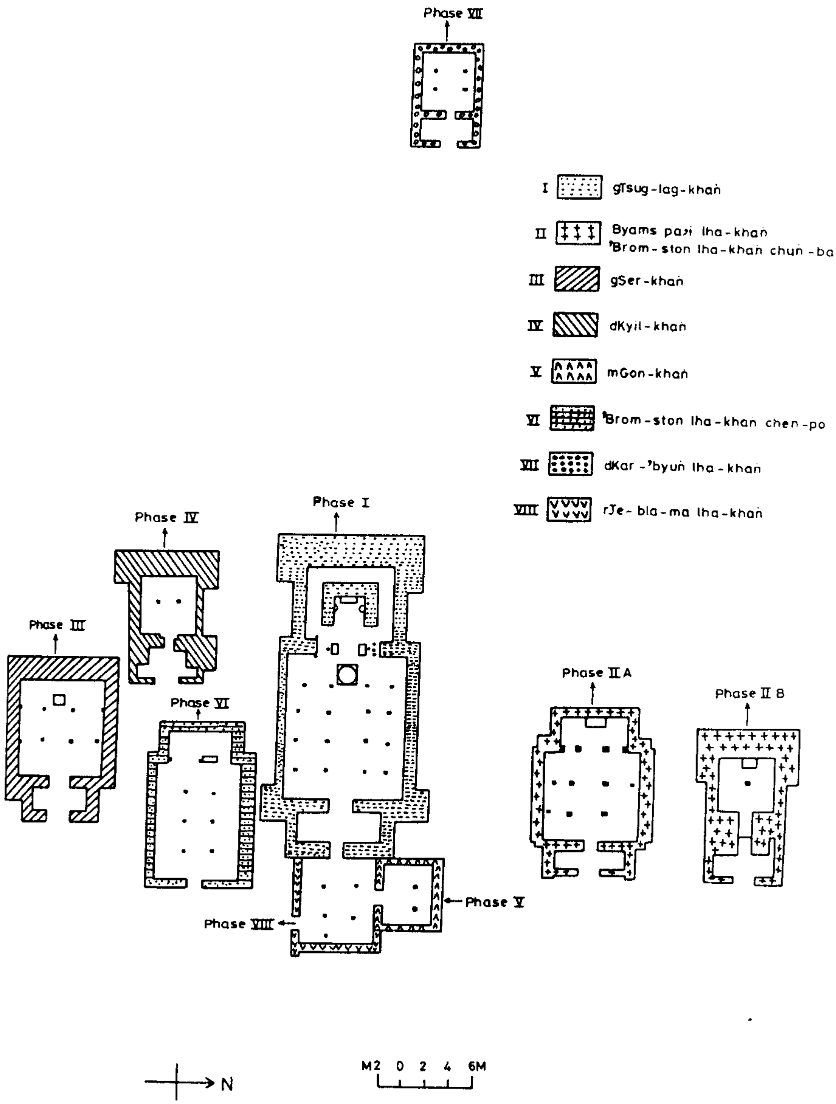


Fig. 12 Eight phases of construction, the chronological plan of Tabo monastery

at all. The traces of murals, commissioned by Ye-śes-'od, are visible on the walls of the circumambulation. What appears from the architectonic arrangement discussed above is that the two groups of artists were engaged in the reconstruction of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. One group in the 'Du-khaṅ and the other in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. The craftsmen working in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ followed a consistent style in designing the crowns of the clay sculptures as well as the crowns of the Bodhisattvas painted on the walls of the circumambulation.

PHASE II

The surviving art styles and architectural remains in the complex suggest that two temples were added in the second phase. They include Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. It seems quite unlikely that the huge statue of Byams-pa sPyi-bo and several murals on the walls belong to the period of its foundation. The only remnants of actual construction are their architectural plans. In the former case, it is a copy of the *nāgara* temple plan,[18] showing *bhadra* and *karṇa* proliferations, quite unusual especially in the layout of the monasteries; in the latter case, it has copied its plan from that of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, omitting an inner chamber and a *pradakṣiṇāpatha*. Two minutely carved wooden doors bear close resemblance to the wooden doors of the Markulā Devī temple in Udaipur (Lahaul-Spiti)[19] and Rang-rig-rtse monastery in Tsarang (Kinnaur). Comparative art studies show that the wooden door of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ is anterior to the door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. Both doors have been arranged in series of jambs (*pedyas*) and lintels (*uttaraṅgas*). Gaṇeśa (16 cm by 16 cm) occupies a central position on the *lalāṭa-bimba* of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ's door. Several totally mutilated figures (all in standing positions) appear on either side of the third doorjamb. Four goddesses and three gods (from left to right they represent Amoghasiddhi, Vairocana and Akṣobhya) appear on the lintel above Gaṇeśa. The door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba is carved with *patralatā* and *phūllāvallī* designs. A seated figure appears on the *lalāṭa-bimba*, with its hands in *dharmacakra-mudrā*, and may, therefore, represent a Vairocana.[20] A proportion of 1 : 2 has been maintained for both doors as shown above in Table 2.

One of the temples is named after a famous bKa'-gdams-pa scholar, 'Brom-ston. Whether he ever visited Tabo is uncertain but a temple named after him seems to have been built after his death. One of his disciples namely rṄog-blon-ldan śes-rab (AD 1059–1109) attended the

chos-'khor (a religious council) called by rTse-lde at Tabo in AD 1076.[21] rTse-lde's son dBaṅ-phyug-lde (Khri bKra-śis dbaṅ-phug Nam-mkha'-btsan as given by Bu-ston) also became rṄog-blon-ldan śes-rab's supporter. The *Deb-ther sṅon-po* tells us that rṄog spent seventeen years in Kashmir and returned to Tibet in AD 1092.[22] What becomes clear from the discussion given above is that till the end of the eleventh century AD, the kings of Gu-ge patronized a great number of *lo-tsā-bas* and artists. As a result, two temples at Tabo were added in the last quarter of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century AD. The surviving wooden doors and the stone bases of the columns testify amply to such dating. The murals on the walls of both temples were painted under dGe-lugs-pa's hegemony in later times. Twenty-one forms of Tārās in Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ's sanctum perhaps belong to the time of its completion.

PHASE III

There has been some confusion as to whether the gSer-lha-khaṅ or dKyil-khaṅ can be placed in this phase. The plan of the Tabo complex painted on the north wall of the dKyil-khaṅ clearly shows six chapels in a row—three on the left of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of a Tibetan scholar and three on the right, but the names of only five temples are legible. They include gTsug-lag-khaṅ, gSer-khaṅ, 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ, Byams-khaṅ, and the dKar-chuṅ ('byuṅ). The dKar-'byuṅ has been shown on the extreme right hand corner and the gSer-khaṅ adjacent to the gTsug-lag-khaṅ on the left side. Such an arrangement indicates that the gSer-lha-khaṅ was in existence when a mural depicting the plan of the Tabo complex was painted. We consider this mural extremely important for establishing a reliable chronology of temples in the complex. In the absence of inscriptions, one chapel painted on the mural, remains unidentified. The rectangular plan depicted on the right side seems to represent that of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. To our estimate the mGon-khaṅ had not come into existence. There seems to be a wide gap between the artistic activities of phases II and III. This discontinuity may perhaps be due to the breaking up of the western Tibetan 'confederation' at the beginning of the twelfth century as pointed out by L. Petech.[23]

No historical inscription has survived in the gSer-lha-khaṅ. There are long dedicatory inscriptions in Lan-tsha on the wings below the murals similar to those seen on the walls of the Red temple at Tsaparang. Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho informs us that the temples of Tsaparang were rebuilt,

enlarged and embellished in the time of Blo-bzaṅ rab-brtan.[24] His wife, Don-grub-ma, built the Red temple under the influence of Ṅag-dbaṅ grags-pa, a pupil of Tsoṅ-kha-pa. If we accept the statement of Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, the Red temple may date from the middle of the fifteenth century. The murals painted on the walls of the gSer-lha-khaṅ at Tabo make an interesting comparison with those of Tasparang and Tholing.

The mural of Amitābha on the left wall is interesting and comparable with a *thaṅ-ka* on the same theme in the collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). There are, however, several inconsistencies between the two. Two attendants of Amitābha in the Tabo mural appear on the border of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* whereas those of the LACMA appear outside the border and a third aura encircles them. The other details of paradise are almost identical. It seems very likely that the paradise scenes were painted during the hegemony of the dGe-lugs-pas. The mural of the Vairocana bears a close resemblance to the Prajñāpāramita painted on the wall of the White temple (Lha-khaṅ dkar-po) at Tholing. The Prajñāpāramita mural has been dated by Tucci to the 'sixteenth or fifteenth centuries'.[25]

A closer study of the two murals suggests that the same artist did the paintings both at Tabo and at Tholing. Especially the broad shoulders, the thinning down of lines at the level of the navel, the arrangement of scarfs over the shoulders, the design of ear-rings, lotus-thrones, the method of depicting the lions and elephants below the lotus-thrones and two dark blue auras encircled by a flaming design are some common characteristics of these murals. It is quite clear from the accounts of Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho that Ṅag-dbaṅ grags-pa was given the abbotship of Tholing and Blos-stans monasteries by the kings of Gu-ge. As a result, the rulers of Gu-ge accepted the teachings of the dGe-lugs-pa sect. The art activity at Tholing, under the guidance of the Yellow sect, began in the 1450s and, subsequently, spread to the western parts of Gu-ge. Thus the gSer-lha-khaṅ at Tabo belongs to this phase dominated by the dGe-lugs-pas. It was in the second half of the fifteenth century that the Tabo monastic complex was taken over by the Yellow sect and has till today remained under its dominance.

PHASE IV

In plan the dKyil-khaṅ follows the pattern of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. As pointed out earlier, one of the temples referred to in the mural on the right wall is dKar-chuṅ. In my

estimate this indicates dKyil-khaṅ. This chapel is a *maṇḍala*-hall, where three walls are decorated with three different *maṇḍalas*, to which the disciple was introduced by his spiritual guide (teacher) after long years of meditation and erudition. The central wall has a *maṇḍala* of Vairocana. The north wall preserves an Akṣobhya *maṇḍala* and the south wall possesses a *maṇḍala* of Śākyamuni. Several smaller *maṇḍalas* involving Buddhist themes have been painted on the south wall which included those of rDo-rje-gdan (Vajrāsana), Chos-rgyal (Dharmarāja) Po-ta-la and bDe-ba-can (Sukhāvatī). Also, the names of several Indian Buddhist *ācāryas* such as Kamalaśīla, Siṁhabhadra, Asaṅga, Indrabhūti, Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Vasubandhu and Nāgārjuna have been noticed. Several inscriptions of a historical nature have survived on the north wall in a panel measuring 44.5 cm by 92 cm. They are the great *sthavira* Āryadharma, the king bSod-nams-lde, the ministers dPon-btsun of Graṅ-dkar and Rin-rgyam. The figure of bSod-nams-lde is bigger than that of the others. The *dPag-bsam ljon-bzaṅ* mentions that bSod-nams-lde was the king of Purang to whom was transferred the kingdom of Ya-tshe (*su(spu) raṅs nas bsod-nams-lde ya-tsher spyan draṅs nas*).[26] There seems to be a close connection between the house of Gu-ge and the houses of Purang and Ya-tshe. If the bSod-nams-lde of the dKyil-khaṅ inscription is the same person referred to in the above work that would probably prompts a new question as to whether Spiti ever remained under the hegemony of the Ya-tshe rulers. The murals of four persons are painted above this panel. The name of the first is illegible, the other three are identifiable as *Paṇḍita* Gaṅ-lo, Byaṅ-sems nam-kha-'od (Nam-mkha'-'od) and *druṅ-chen* Blo-ldan dbaṅ-po. Above them appears a sitting figure of rJe Lha-dbaṅ, a disciple of mKhas-grub-rje.

The south wall on its eastern corner also displays a mural depicting (from left to right) Pho-raṅ (braṅ) gTsug-pa Byaṅ-chub-'od, Bla-ma Zhi-ba-'od and lHa-bla-ma Ye-śes-'od. Below this mural appears an eight-line inscription which is totally mutilated. The western corner of the same wall has another historical inscription which reads: *rje-la Bu-ston pas 'dus rgyud gnas*, thus referring to Bu-ston (AD 1290–1364). In the middle register is depicted a dGe-lugs-pa monk with his hands in *dharmacakra-pravartana-mudrā*. An incomplete inscription on the top of the lotus throne reads: '*rje-btsun chos-kyi rgyal-po thams-cad <m>khyen-pa blo . . . .*' The title is the most esteemed one given to the high spiritual authorities of Tibet. In our estimate, it represents Tsoṅ-kha-pa, which is further confirmed by two items traditionally associated with him, a sword and a book, placed on either side.

Numerous inscriptions of a historical nature have provided us the names of important persons. However, the problem of dating the dKyil-khaṅ remains unsolved. One of the inscriptions has also referred to Bu-ston. bSod-nams-lde became the ruler of Ya-tshe in AD 1328. The art-style and iconography of several gods and goddesses usually show a technique slightly different from those seen in the murals of the gSer-lha-khaṅ. However, the flowing scarfs, a characteristic feature of the gSer-lha-khaṅ's murals, has been retained. Thus we propose a late fifteenth-century date for the construction of the dKyil-khaṅ, and most likely all the *maṇḍalas* had been completed by then.

PHASE V

The sixth chapel in chronological order is the mGon-khaṅ. This is actually a temple of rDo-rje 'Jigs-byed chen-po (Mahāvajrabhairava), the tutelary deity of the dGe-lugs-pas. Vajrabhairava is regarded as the wrathful aspect of Mañjuśrī, the lord of wisdom. Tsoṅ-kha-pa, the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa sect, wrote several works on rDo-rje 'Jigs-byed. The *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*[27] informs us that Tsoṅ-kha-pa's disciple Ṅag-dbaṅ grags-pa erected an image of rDo-rje 'Jigs-byed at Duṅ-dkar sñiṅ. The same source further tells us that the great-grandsons of Blo-bzaṅ rab-brtan, namely 'Jig-rten dbaṅ-phyug, 'Jam-dbyaṅs and Phyag-rdor, built the White temple and the Vajrabhairva temple at Tsaparang.[28] The above mentioned rulers lived during the time of the Second Dalai Lama dGe-'dun rgya-mtsho (AD 1475–1542). In AD 1540, the eldest brother 'Jig-rten dbaṅ-phyug sent to the Dalai Lama a substantial amount of money intended for the construction of the mṄa'-ris gra-tshaṅ. Again in AD 1555 along with Śānti-pa he paid homage to the Third Dalai Lama, bSod-nams rgya-mtsho.[29] What is established by the above account is that the concept of devoting a separate temple to the protective deity within the monastery's precincts originated with the dGe-lugs-pa. The Vajrabhairava temple (the *yi-dam* of the new sect) at Tsaparang became a model for the entire region, i.e. mṄa'-ris-skor-gsum. The earliest mGon-khaṅ in Ladakh also dates back to the period of bKra-śis rnam-rgyal (AD 1555–75).[30]

The mGon-khaṅ at Tabo cannot be attributed to a period earlier than the beginning of the sixteenth century AD. The wall murals, though having altogether different themes, showing various manifestations of the protective deities including the Vajrabhairava on the central wall, can be compared with the dKyil-khaṅ. One of the murals depicted on

the middle register of the south wall on the right side shows a central female figure surrounded by her thirteen followers, each group represented by a chief deity. The *ardha-candra* decoration above these figures is comparable with those shown on the murals of Byaṅ-chub-'od, Zhi-ba-'od and Ye-śes-'od in the dKyil-khaṅ. A significant stylistic change noticeable in this case are the crescents formed by knots, whereas in the dKyil-khaṅ the cotton or woollen cloth is either pasted or fixed with nails to a wooden rod. The arrangement of the followers gathered around a central deity in the mGon-khaṅ is a peculiar feature of the mṄa'-ris style and such scenes have not been seen in the post-sixteenth-century murals. It seems very likely that the mGon-khaṅ was constructed slightly later than the dKyil-khaṅ. The designer of the temple had no option but to select a place just outside the entrance of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ to accommodate it.

PHASE VI

The murals and inscriptions in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po indicate that the decay of Gu-ge art had set in during the period of its construction. The decorative scheme of this temple closely resembles that of the Red temple at Tsaparang. Its north and south walls depict the murals of the Bhaiṣajyagurus (sMan-bla), four on either side. Below their lotus thrones have been painted the twelve moments of Buddha's life (*mdzad-pa bcu-gñis*). Similar themes have been painted at Tsaparang.[31] The mural painted on the left wall, near the terminus, begins with Śākyamuni's descent from the Tuṣita paradise and ends at the eastern corner of the north wall with the depiction of eight *stūpas*. The central wall shows Amitābha flanked by his two acolytes. Maitreya and Mañjuśrī appear on the adjoining walls.

The costume, iconography and decorative details of the medicine Buddhas are comparable with the gods of medicine painted at Tsaparang. Striking similarities have been noticed in the arrangement of the *prabhā-maṇḍala*, the method of wearing the religious robes (*chos-sgos*) and the depiction of M-type design below the lotus throne. Similarities also occur in the arrangement of two attendants on either side of the central figure outside the aura, the dark blue aura of the attendants and the dark blue borders of the clothes worn by the medicinal Buddhas.

No specific date has been assigned by Tucci to the construction and decoration of the Red temple at Tsaparang. The blank spaces intended for inscriptions has, however, led Tucci to remark that 'the fall of the

kingdom at the hands of the princes of Ladakh interrupted the work started by the dynasty of Gu-ge'.[32] From the time of bKra-śis rnam-rgyal, the kings of Ladakh were trying to extend the boundaries of their kingdom eastward. The severest blow to the independence of Gu-ge was given during the reign of Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal. After sixteen years of continued struggle he succeeded in subduing the kingdom of Gu-ge in AD 1630.[33] The Red temple at Tsaparang may have been constructed and embellished in the beginning of the seventeenth century and possibly the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po at Tabo may date from the second or third decade of the seventeenth century, before the entire region including Zangskar, Spiti, Purang, Ruthog and Gu-ge became parts of Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal's eastern territorial acquisitions.

PHASE VII

I estimate that before the construction of the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ, the walls of the enclosure had come into existence. The boundary on the western side perhaps remained ill-determined. The construction of *stūpa* no. 21 marked the western extension of the north wall, whereas *stūpa* no. 22 had to be adjusted within the enclave. Therefore a 2.40 m projection was given to the south wall. *Stūpa* no. 23 marked the western end finally brought this enclave to a close, thus forcing the architects of the dKar-'byuṅ to adjust it along the western wall.

No inscription has survived in this temple. The style of murals on its four walls clearly indicates that the painter had been inspired by the style and technique noticed on the redecorated murals of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. The latter temple, perhaps for the first time, has shown the use of clouds for filling-up large blank spaces. The same technique has been used on a larger scale on the walls of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. We have noticed the use of clouds on the eastern wall of the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. Again here we see eight medicine Buddhas on the right wall, regional in style. The appearance of Tsoṅ-kha-pa along with his disciples on the south wall undeniably shows that it firmly remained a dGe-lugs-pa stronghold after its take-over from the bKa'-gdams-pa. If 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po was added during the second or third decade of the seventeenth century, a decade or two might have elapsed between the construction of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the dKar-'byuṅ. The political dominance of the Ladakhi rulers, namely Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal and his successor bDe-ldan rnam-rgyal, over Spiti from AD 1630 to 1684 did not forestall

the construction activity at Tabo, and, interestingly, it continued to be a dGe-lugs-pa centre. Nevertheless, these rulers promoted the bKa'-brgyud-pa 'Brug-pa order in Ladakh.

PHASE VIII

The last phase is represented by the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ. It was in existence along with its wall murals in 1909 when A.H. Francke visited this monastery (Fig. 5). Some of the murals on its walls belong to the beginning of the twentieth century because Francke saw a painter redecorating the wall murals afresh.[34] It was perhaps the same artist who painted a few murals on the eastern wall of the *maṇḍapa* in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. One of the earliest accounts of Tabo monastery appears in Thomas Hutton's writings. On 16 June 1838, Hutton observes: '. . . the village of Tabo, which is chiefly inhabited by Lamas, who cultivate the soil, and attend upon the takoordwara, or temple, which is a large building, and ornamented inside with a number of earthern figures of their gods, by no means badly executed.'[35] He did not refer to the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ which interrupts the entry to the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Therefore, we are inclined to suggest that the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ did not come into existence till 1838. All walls of this hall are adorned with murals. Many figures are easily identifiable for they bear inscriptions below the lotus thrones. The names of Lo-chen Rin-chen bzaṅ-po, 'Brom-ston, Atīśa and sLob-dpon Seṅ-ge bzaṅ-po appear above the door.

The evolutionary sequence detailed above makes it clear that the gTsug-lag-khaṅ was founded in AD 996 and rebuilt in AD 1042. Several temples within the complex and the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ were added in the subsequent centuries. The rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ, being the latest, was added in the second half of the nineteenth century. The residential complex adjoining the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ and an upper storey which extends up to the vestibule of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po were also added in later times.

Interestingly, no mural on the walls of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ represents a *maṇḍala* so frequently painted on the walls of several temples at Alchi, Lhalung and Nako. The whole gTsug-lag-khaṅ represents the Vajradhātu Mahāmaṇḍala, the prototype of all other *maṇḍalas*, described in the *STTS*.[36] The plan of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ is *ekaṅga* (a single offset) with an inner chamber (*garbhagṛha*) separated by a *skor-lam* (*pradakṣiṇā-patha*) round the clay statue of Amitābha. The study of Himalayan building plans shows that the regional architectural traditions determined

the form of a structure.[37] The gTsug-lag-khaṅ seems to be a work of either Chamba or Kulu artists who were well conversant in the designing of such ground plans. Its comparison with the plans of the Lakṣaṇā Devī, Śakti Devī and Markulā Devī temples makes an interesting study. All the temples mentioned belong to the *sāndhāra* variety of temples, each possessing a circumambulation round the sanctum.[38] The artist working at Tabo made an innovation by adding projections on either side of the central (western) wall so as to give added strength to the mud-bricks walls. The same technique was subsequently followed in the plans of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba and the dKyil-khaṅ. The discovery of three Śāradā inscriptions from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, missed both by Francke and Tucci, confirms the statement of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po that he brought along with him thirty-two artists from Kashmir.[39] The flow of artists from the western-Himalayan kingdoms of Kashmir, Chamba, Kangra, Kulu and Simla Hill states continued to the kingdom of Gu-ge in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

It was the same missionary spirit of the late-tenth century which saw the creation of two chapels (*lha-khaṅs*) during the second phase. Unfortunately, no important wall mural of this phase has survived to offer a comparative study with those of the first phase. Two wooden doors, however, follow a carving tradition which undeniably shows the same craftsmanship noticed on the two missing wooden Buddhas from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The wood-carving tradition has a close affinity with the Markulā Devī temple, Udaipur (Lahaul-Spiti). An almost contemporaneous example of such exquisite carvings on a door has survived at Tsarang in Kinnaur which also has a seated figure of Vairocana on the *lalāṭa-bimba* like the one carved on the door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. The plan of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ has two projections, i.e. *bhadra* and *karṇa* proliferations which make it a *dvayaṅga* type of structure. A similar arrangement can be noticed in the plan of the Sum-tsek temple, Alchi. The immediate source for this type of plan was the plans of the *nāgara* temples in Himachal Pradesh. The working out of such plans certainly involved a meticulous measurement of proportions, hence were not favoured for a long period.

There seems to be wide gap between the second and third phases. The first two phases were influenced by the pḥilosophical tenets of the bKa'-gdams-pas, whereas the third phase marked the beginning of the dGe-lugs-pa influence in Spiti. The appearance of the Lan-tsha script on the dado makes it clear that the monastic centres of Tholing and Tsaparang became sources of inspiration for the entire western-Himala-

yan region. Whatever originated in these centres was emulated in the two other mṄa'-ris. The control of this monastery was usurped by the dGe-lugs-pa in the fifteenth century which manifested in the introduction of a set of iconographic designs based on the experiences of their founder Tsoṅ-kha-pa and his immediate successors. Though there was no major deviation from the earlier set of divinities, the artists and their patrons favoured scenes and *maṇḍalas* from the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* and the *Saddharmapūṇḍarika*. The period saw the zenith of the Gu-ge art which assimilated several streams of styles. The murals in the gSer-lha-khaṅ amply corroborate it.

Phases IV and V are almost continuations of the previous phase. There seems to be a renewed interest in the *maṇḍalas* as seen on the walls of the dKyil-khaṅ. The depiction of certain rulers, ministers and most venerated dGe-lugs-pa authorities such as Tsoṅ-kha-pa and Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros on the walls along with inscriptions do indicate how politics dominated the sacred domain even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as was the case during the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Chinese style of cloud formations reached Tsaparang during the same period and we have noticed its use for filling up spaces on the ceiling of the dKyil-khaṅ. An independent temple within the enclosure dedicated to the *yi-dam* (tutelary deity) of the dGe-lugs-pa was constructed at Tsaparang during the first half of the sixteenth century. The same practice was emulated at Tabo resulting in major liturgical conventions as the mGon-khaṅ, which became the centre of daily rituals and main worship. It is important to note that some of the Siddhas of the bKa'-brgyud-pa pantheon have been painted on the south wall of the dKyil-khaṅ. Could their presence be interpreted as the beginning of the bKa'-brgyud-pa influence at Tabo? For a reliable answer to this question further probing is needed.

With phase VI set in the decadence of the Gu-ge art. The beginning of the seventeenth century was a period of internecine rivalries between the kingdoms of Ladakh and Gu-ge resulting in the complete subjugation of the latter in AD 1630.[40] The artists showed renewed interest in depicting the acts of the Buddha on the walls of the temple along with the eight medicine Buddhas. The earlier stylistic conventions such as narrow waists and long thin limbs with bends disappeared, and clusters of cloud formations observed in phases IV and V, dominated the blank spaces on the walls. The Kashmiri and Chamba features of art assimilated into their own vocabulary of forms and lines by the artists of Gu-ge seem to have lost their grip on earlier conventions. The use of Lan-tsha

and War-tu scripts along with *dbu-can* characters in *tshugs-thuṅ* and *riṅ* appear on the walls of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ (the murals of the latter were painted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) to illustrate either a particular scene from the life of the Buddha or a dGe-lugs-pa incarnate.

The main feature of the last two phases was that the dGe-lugs-pa continued to be the main occupants of this complex. From AD 1630 to 1684 many bKa'-gdams-pa and dGe-lugs-pa monasteries were taken over by the adherents of the bKa'-brgyud-pa 'Brug-pa sect. The rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ which was the last addition to the enclave follows the same techniques of construction used earlier. No attention was given to its orientation as most of the temples with the exception of the mGon-khaṅ face east. The Buddhists of Tabo seem to have favoured the *dbu-can* script since all inscriptions with minor mistakes are written with blue ink on yellow surfaces. The murals painted on the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ's walls show that the patrons and their artists favoured the past Buddhas, five Tathāgatas, the medicine Buddhas, Avalokiteśvara, Tsoṅ-kha-pa and a few goddesses along with scholars such as Rin-chen bzaṅ-po, Atīśa and 'Brom-ston. Thus the bKa'-gdams-pa teachers who had founded this monastic complex in the late tenth century have been remembered again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by painting their murals over the door.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ

Each temple in the complex stands independently and thus the sacred enclave does not possess any geometric proportions. Three architectural components of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, however, symbolize the three-fold universe: *kāma-dhātu*, *rūpa-dhātu* and *arūpa-dhātu*. The sGo-khaṅ, which is the outermost section, depicts scenes from the actual world representing princes of Gu-ge along with numerous *dge-sloṅs*. Thereafter, we ascend to the 'Du-khaṅ representing the world of *rūpa-dhātu*. The murals on the walls depict scenes from the Buddhist texts including the *Gaṇḍavyūha* of the Avataṁsakasūtra and the *Lalitavistara*. The further we go into the most sacred chamber, the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ, there prevails an ecstatic tranquillity. Here in this chamber the Buddha manifests himself as Amitābha. Could his presence in the sanctum represent the descent of the Divine on earth or the one entering into the Pure land of Amitābha (Sukhāvatī)?

The symbolism of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ can be comprehended from

the sculptural and decorative point of view. It shows the *maṇḍalas* from the Buddhist texts of the Sūtra and Tantra class. The 'Du-khaṅ's sculptural decoration is based on the *STTS*, the fundamental text of the Yoga-tantras. The work was translated into Tibetan by Śraddhākaravarman and Rin-chen bzaṅ-po in the late tenth century (slightly before the foundation of the Tabo monastery) under the title *De-bzhin gśegs-pa thams-cad kyi de kho na ñid bsdus-pa zhes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po'i mdo* (Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha nāma Mahāyāna-sūtra).[41] The sculptural decoration on the four walls of the 'Du-khaṅ represents the Vajradhātu Mahāmaṇḍala of the first Samaya of the *STTS*. According to Lokesh Chandra, this *maṇḍala* 'explains the sambhoga-kāya of Vairocana, who has attained perfect illumination by passing through the meditation of the five representations . . . It gives to disciples the mode of rapidly attaining Bodhisattvahood'.[42] The sculptures in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ stand independently. The eighty-three-line extract from the *Kṣiti-garbha-sūtra* has been written on the south terminus of the *skor-lam*. The blank space on the right hand side in the same panel, perhaps, was intended for the *Ākāśagarbha-sūtra*.

The murals in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, especially depicted on the walls of the 'Du-khaṅ, bring the entire Mahāyānic philosophy in a visual display. They depict the journey of a young pilgrim-aspirant, Sudhana, for Supreme Enlightenment who finally enters the realm of reality—Dharmadhātu—through consultations with fifty-three good friends (Kalyāṇamitras). And lastly, the foundation of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ symbolizes the triumph of Buddhism over the aboriginal beliefs and the Bonpos. Thus it was the triumph of one cosmic symbolism over another.

The history of the evolution of the Tabo monastic complex is one of continuity and change over the last one thousand years. It is a place located in the centre of the three mṄa'-ris. A reference to the *sārthavāha* in the renovation inscription makes it clear that the caravan route passed through the Spiti valley which linked the north-western regions such as Kashmir, northern Pakistan, Afghanistan and parts of the Chinese Turkistan with western Uttar Pradesh, eastern India (Bihar and Bengal), Nepal, central and eastern provinces of Tibet namely dBus, gTsaṅ and Khams. The regular traffic of traders and pilgrims from both directions kept this monastery a thriving and living centre of Buddhism. Two-way transmission of art-technologies, languages, literature, political and social thoughts made possible the assimilation of a wide variety of traditions and their expressions in visual arts on the clay-plastered walls of temples at Tabo. The sustained movement of learned Buddhists across

the trans-Himalayan boundaries enriched the thoughts of different civilizations. The archaeological remains at Tabo are witness to diverse dialogues and art-traditions, and are an astonishing example of how continuity and change have been meaningfully expressed through *mantra, mudrā* and *maṇḍala* in colour, clay and wood.

NOTES

1. Thakur, *Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*, pp. 26–7.
2. *Cullavagga*, ed. Bhikku J. Kashyap, Pāli Publication Board (Nālandā-Devanāgarī-Pāli Series), Nalanda, 1956, p. 239; for English translation, *see* I.B. Horner, tr. *The Book of Discipline (Vinaya Piṭaka) vol. V: Cullavagga*, London, 1963, p. 205.
3. Ibid., p. 206.
4. There are several works on the cave architecture of India but an admirable and precise account is given by B.C. Law, 'Evolution of Cave Architecture in India and Ceylon', *PIHC*, eighth session, 1945, pp. 51–62; *also see* Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, rpt, Delhi, 1988, pp. 92–7.
5. For a detailed account on the pagoda temples, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*, pp. 105–19.
6. Buddhaghosa cited in Dutt, p. 95. *See also Mahāvagga*, ed. Bhikku J. Kashyap, Pāli Publication Board (Nālandā-Devanāgarī-Pāli Series), Nalanda, 1956, ch. III, p. 147).
7. During the time of Francke's explorations in the western Himalayas in July 1909, the physical condition of the monastery was very different from what it is now. A vestibule has been added to the dKyil-khaṅ and the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. The orientation of the entrance has been changed towards the south. The kitchen does not appear at all in the plan illustrated by Francke. Twenty-three *stūpas* have been located by him with remarkable accuracy. A ruined *stūpa* adjacent to *stūpa* no. 1 has not been plotted by him. We have also left it out in our plan. A wooden frame which interrupts the eastern face of Vairocana does not exist at all, and two clay statues of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and a statue of Gaṇeśa were placed near the altar adjacent to the lotus throne of the Vairocana. Now Gaṇeśa has been placed in the *antarāla; see* Francke, *Antiquities*, pp. 37-43, pls XIV–XVIII, and fig. 2 on page 39.
8. Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet and Their Artistic Symbolism: The Monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar* (Indo-Tibetica, III:1), eds Lokesh Chandra et al., New Delhi, 1988, pp. 21–115, fig. 1 on p. 24.
9. Ibid., p. 23
10. David L. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya: Travels and Studies in Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 182–93.

11. Romi Khosla's *Buddhist Monasteries in the Western Himalaya* (Kathmandu, 1979) is the first important work which gives us a detailed layout of Tabo and many other monasteries in Ladakh and Lahaul-Spiti. There are many inconsistencies in his measurements of almost all the *lha-khaṅs* including the boundary wall at Tabo. We, however, took the measurements in 1988–9 and re-checked them in 1991, a few months before the Archaeological Survey of Indin (ASI) started massive repairs within the complex. The ASI has provided cement flooring in all the *lha-khaṅs* except 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and mGon-khaṅ. Perhaps in September–October 1991, the solid stone buttress walls were built around the three sides of a each *lha-khaṅ*. A provision was made in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ to allow a natural light through a peep-hole from the middle of its roof (*IAR*, 1973–74, p. 71). The latter provision may prove diastrous since the sun's rays entering directly or reflected through glasses will destroy the murals on the walls of the *maṇḍapa*. The murals painted on the northern wall at the lowest level have all deteriorated. The devotees too rub their shoulders against the walls while they perform their circumambulation both in the *garbhagṛha* and the *maṇḍapa*. It is not improbable that these unique murals will perish within few years as we have seen them deteriorating year by year since 1988.
12. One of the three lectures delivered by M.N. Deshpande was devoted to the art of Tabo; *see* 'Tabo: The Himalayan Ajanta', *Bulletin of Tibetology*, vol. X, no. 3, pp. 32–44.
13. Khosla, *Buddhist Monasteries*, fig. 1, p. 38.
14. *See* ch. V.
15. *See* Khosla, *Buddhist Monasteries*, p. 38; D. Klimburg-Salter, ed., *The Silk Route and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes*, Los Angeles, 1982, pp. 157 ff., fig. 50.
16. The correct form would be *bkod-pa* in this and the next inscription, *see* below chapter VII.
17. *See* ch. VII where the renovation inscription has been translated; also Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet*, pp. 195, 199.
18. For the lay-out of the *nāgara* temple plans, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, pp. 26–84.
19. Ibid., p. 96, pls XCIII, XCIV.
20. Vairocana in a similar position also appears on the *lalāṭa-bimba* of the Rang-rig-rtse monastery, Tsarang.
21. G.N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, pp. 71, 325, 328. Several later Tibetan annals unanimously suggest that the religious council (*chos-'khor*) of AD 1076, popularly known as the 'Council of the Fire-Dragon Year' was held during the reign of rTse-lde. The venue of this conference has not yet been discovered. The *Deb-ther sṅon-po* states that 'the Kashmirian Jñānaśrī came to Tibet, he took up residence at Chos-'khor Tabo (in Spiti)' (p. 355). The colophon of the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* mentions

Tholing as the venue of the religious council; *see* L. Shastri, 'The Fire-Dragon *chos-'khor* (1076 AD)', in *Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the IATS, Graz, 1995*, Wien, 1997, vol. II, pp. 873–82.

22. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, p. 328.
23. The possibility of the break up of the Western-Tibetan 'confederation' at the beginning of the twelfth century has been imagined by Petech. For example *see* his, 'Ya-t'se, Gu-ge, Pu-raṅ: A New Study', *CAJ*, vol. XXIV, 1980, pp. 87, 100.
24. *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, p. 222.
25. Tucci and Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet*, p. 167 and a plate facing p. 169.
26. S.C. Das, ed. *Pag-sam Jon-zang, Pts. I and II: History of the Rise, Progress and Downfall of Buddhism in India by Sumpa Khan-po Yese Pal Jor*, Calcutta, 1908, p. 152.
27. *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, p. 220.
28. Ibid., p. 222.
29. Petech, 'Ya-t'se, Gu-ge, Pu-raṅ', p. 106.
30. *See* Snellgrove and Skorupski, *Cultural Heritage*, vol. I, pp. 84, 99.
31. Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet and Their Artistic Symbolism: Tsaparang* (Indo-Tibetica III.2), Lokesh Chandra et al. (eds), Delhi, 1989, pp. 133–54.
32. Ibid., p. 133.
33. Petech, 'The Tibetan-Ladakhi Moghal War', pp. 169–99; Ahmad, 'New Light on the Tibet-Ladakhi-Mughal War', pp. 340–61.
34. Francke (*Antiquities*, p. 42) remarks:

    . . . We met a native painter, who was prepared to renovate everything. The monks of the monastery had been told that Government would undertake to pay for necessary repairs in their temples and had asked the Assistant Commissioner to let them have the services of an artist. . . . Mr. Howell . . . , had ordered a painter to go to Tabo and apply his art to its ancient walls. Fortunatley, he had not yet started work in the principal hall, but in all the other halls, there remained little which had not been destroyed either by him or by previous artists. I told the man that he was on no account to touch the walls of the central hall, and when I met Mr. Howell about a week later in Spiti, he promised to give strict orders that no further attempt should be made to 'improve' this precious relic of the past.

35. Hutton, 'Journal of a Trip Through Kunawar, Hungrung, and Spiti', vol. IX, pt. 2, p. 494.
36. *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha*, ed. Lokesh Chandra, Delhi, 1987; For a facsimile reproduction of the tenth-century Manuscript, together with a brief summary of the contents of the text, *see* Lokesh Chandra and David L. Snellgrove, *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha* (Śata-Piṭaka Series), New Delhi, 1981.
37. *See* Laxman S. Thakur, 'Western Himalayan Buddhist Monasteries: An

Architectural Amalgam', a paper presented in *World Archaeological Congress-3*, New Delhi, 4–11 December 1994.

38. For an elaborate discussion on the plans of the Lakṣaṇā Devī, Śaktī Devī and Markulā Devī temples, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*, pp. 89–102.

39. Three different versions of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po's biography give us the information that he brought thirty-two (one version gives thirty-three) artists from Kashmir. Tucci (*Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 3 vols, Roma, 1949, vol. I, p. 273) however has stated that 'he is said to have brought with him, on his return to his country, seventy-five Kashmiri masters'. This, in our estimate, seems to be a misquotation from the folio 33 of a biography which was in Tucci's possession. Instead, J.C. Huntington in an article. 'Guge bris: A Stylistic Amalgam', in P. Pal, ed., *Aspects of Indian Art*, Leiden, 1972, p. 108 has even misquoted Tucci from the same source referred to above. He writes that 'Tucci is able to state that Rin-chen bzang-po returned from his trip accompanied by five Kashmiri artists'. Elsewhere Tucci has given the correct number, i.e. thirty-two artists; *also see Collected Biographical Material about Lo-chen Rin-chen-bzaṅ-po and His Subsequent Reembodiments: A Reproduction of a Collection of manuscripts from the Library of Dkyil Monastery in Spiti*, rDo-rje-tshe-brtan (ed.), Delhi, 1977, no. 3, fol. 94, l. 2; no. 5, fol. 178, l. 2, and no. 6, fol. 261, l. 5–62, l. 1. For an English translation of no. 3, *see* Snellgrove and Skorupski, *Cultural Heritage*, vol. II, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 85–98.

40. *See* ch. II.

41. TT, rGyud IV, vol. 4, Tokyo-Kyoto, 1956, pp. 218–83.

42. Lokesh Chandra, *STTS*, Sanskrit text, p. 26.



IV

Sculpture and Iconography

It seems quite reasonable to devote a separate chapter to the study of sculpture preserved at the monastic complex of Tabo. So far no systematic study has been made of them, and the largest group of thirty-three clay sculptures in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ remains yet to be identified conclusively.[1] The material used for the sculptures at Tabo can be divided into three categories: (i) clay; (ii) stone, and (iii) wood. No metal sculpture of any artistic merit has been noticed *in situ*. A few metal sculptures preserved in the mGon-khaṅ are all recent acquisitions. The largest group consists of clay sculptures, numbering about forty-three, in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, and a huge statue of Maitreya (Byams-pa) in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. The number of wooden and stone sculptures is very small but interesting information on art-technology can be gleaned from two exquisitely carved wooden doors of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. We prefer to present the analyses in chronological order so as to distinguish the characteristics of one phase from another. The architectural analysis presented in the previous chapter makes it clear that the gTsug-lag-khaṅ was the first temple to be established at Tabo. Therefore, its sculptural and decorative details deserve utmost attention, followed by three other temples, i.e. Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba and the gSer-khaṅ. No clay or stone or wood sculpture have been noticed in the remaining five temples.

CLAY SCULPTURE

The clay sculptures preserved in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ can be divided into three groups: (i) thirty-three sculptures belonging to the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala in the 'Du-khaṅ (*maṇḍapa*), (ii) five clay sculptures in the Dri-

gtsaṅ-khaṅ (*garbhagṛha*), and (iii) three sculptures in the sGo-khaṅ (two guardian deities and Gaṇeśa). Two clay statues of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po—each placed on either side of Vairocana (rNam-par snaṅ-mdzad)—are kept on the altar in the 'Du-khaṅ. Let us consider the largest group for discussion which belongs to the Vajrasamāja of the Sarvavid (*Kun-rig*) as described in the first chapter of the *STTS*.[2]

CLAY SCULPTURES IN THE 'DU-KHAṄ AND THEIR IDENTIFICATION

The problem of the identification of the clay sculptures in the 'Du-khaṅ has remained unsolved since the time of Francke. Tucci also tried to

WEST

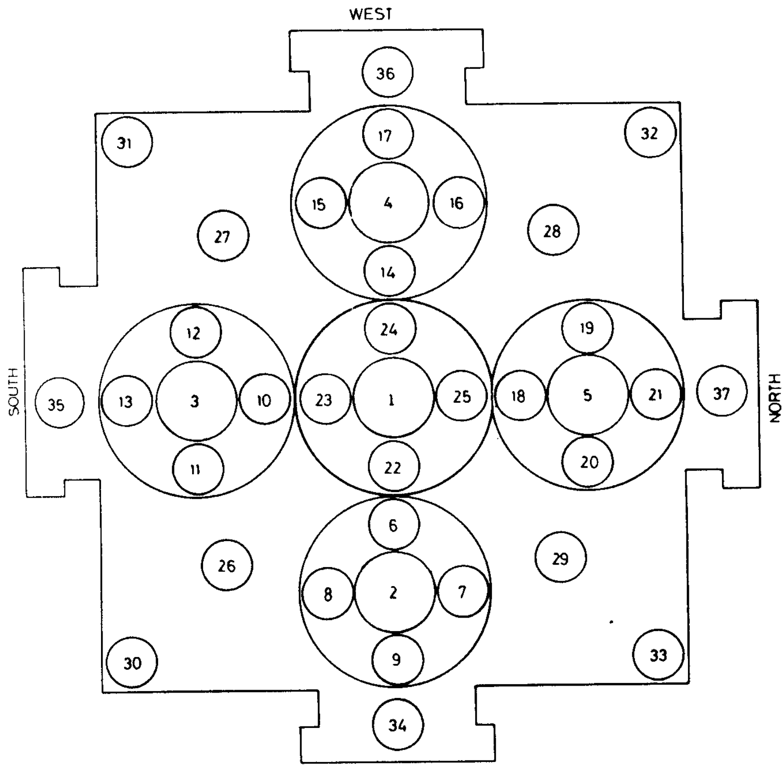


Fig. 13 Arrangement of the dieties of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala According to *STTS*

identify each figure but without success as all six types of Vairocana *maṇḍalas* described by him do not conform to the scheme portrayed at Tabo.[3] The publication of the Sanskrit text of the *STTS* (a source used for visual picturization at Tabo), has facilitated an exact identification of each statue with meticulous precision. It is absolutely necessary to make an exact identification before analysing the Vajradhātumaṇḍala. In Table 3 given below we have given the Sanskrit name of each deity followed by its Tibetan equivalent culled from the Peking edition of the *STTS*. The following columns give the height and width of each figure (wherever possible), followed by the corresponding number of each figure given in the cycle of the thirty-seven deities of the Sarvavid. Lastly, their colour, particular direction, *mudrā* or *lakṣaṇa* have been explained (Fig. 13). What becomes clear from Table 3 is that the identification differs from the one proposed by Tucci. Surprisingly, each figure retains its original position, *mudrā,* colour and ornamentation. The discussion must be taken further to describe their iconographic characteristics beginning with five Tathāgatas, sixteen Bodhisattvas, eight goddesses of offering and four Guardians of the gates (*dvāras*).

FIVE TATHĀGATAS

Like other members of the Vajrasamāja (except four guardian deities), all Tathāgatas are shown seated cross-legged (*padmāsana*). The four-bodied Vairocana is white in colour and the hands of each Buddha are shown in different *mudrās*. What is the *mudrā* displayed by the Vairocana of Tabo? This question needs a detailed discussion. Tucci has given the impression that the Vairocana at Tabo should have been in the 'attitude of meditation'.[4]

The *STTS* in its first chapter has a section on four kinds of *mudrā*: (i) *mahā-jñāna-mudrā*, (ii) *samaya-jñāna-mudrā*, (iii) *dharma-jñāna mudrā* and (iv) *karma-jñāna-mudrā*. In the *karma-jñāna-mudrā*, Vairocana's *mudrā* is explained thus:[5]

> *vāmavajrāṅgulirgrāhya dakṣiṇena*[6] *smutthitā /*
> *bodhāgrī nāma mudreyaṁ buddhabodhi pradāyikā //*

'The *vajra* (diamond) finger of the left hand is to be taken raised on the right side. This *mudrā* (gesture) is *bodhāgrī* (the seal of foremost understanding) which grants perfect wisdom and enlightenment.' The Tibetan translation of the *STTS* made by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and Śraddhākaravarman gives the following reading of the same Sanskrit verses:

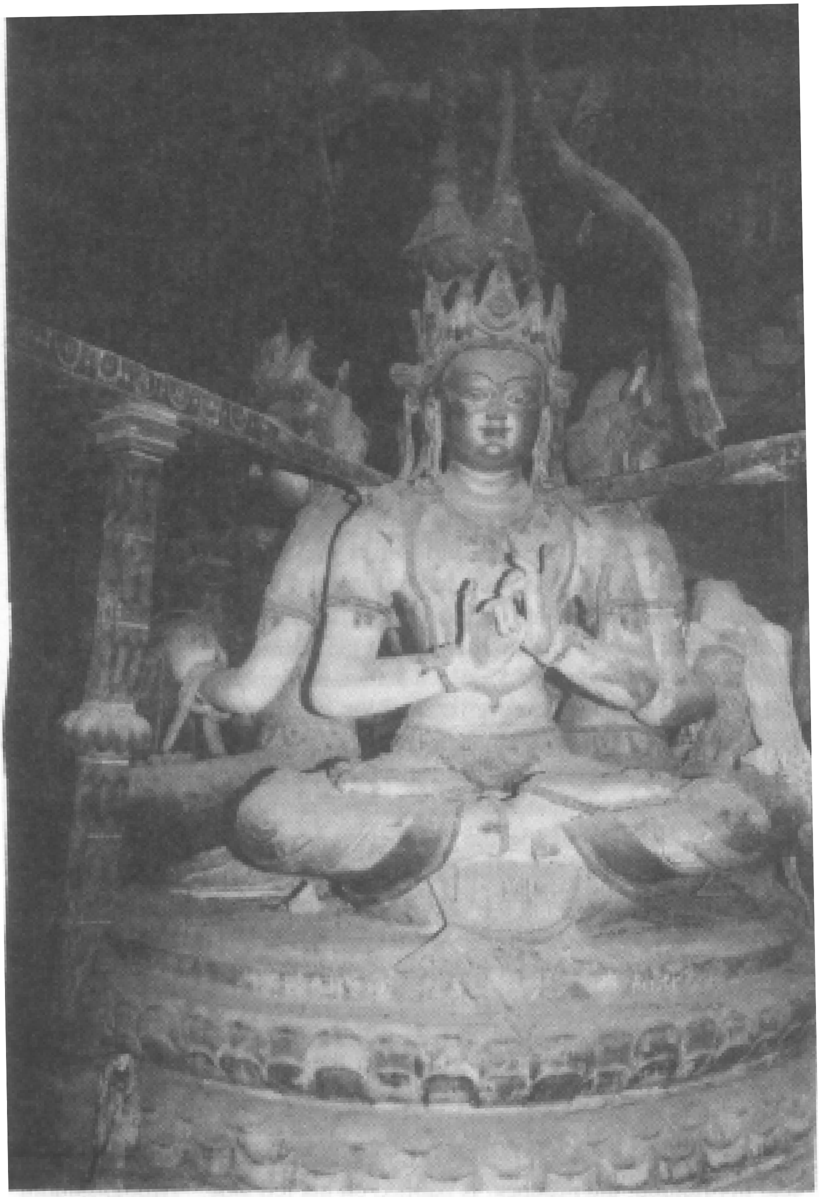
gyon pa'i rdo rje 'dzub mo ni /
gyas pa'i naṅ du bsgreṅ bar bya //
byaṅ chub mchog gi phyag rgya ste /
saṅs rgyas byaṅ chub mchog sbyin pa'o //[7]

The translation of the first two sentences is slightly different from the Sanskrit version given above. It reads: 'The forefinger (*tarjanī*) of the left hand diamond (*vajra*) fist is to be stretched out inside the right hand.'

Is this the *mudrā* formed by Vairocana in the 'Du-khaṅ at Tabo? The position of the two hands of Vairocana in the east and the south (Pl. X) are almost identical. In both, the ring and the middle fingers are pressed by thumb; the little and the index fingers of both hands are raised. In the case of the Vairocana in the south, the *tarjanī* finger of the right hand touches the base of the little finger of the left hand. The eastern Vairocana's hands are separated but two fingers of each hands are in the same positions as those of the south Vairocana. Another variant of this *mudrā* is seen in the northern and the southern Vairocana. Two fingers of the right hand of the western statue are in identical positions as discussed above, but the left hand grasps the two pressed fingers and the thumb. The tip of the right index finger of the northern Vairocana touches the base of the left thumb (Pl. XI). It seems clear that it is not the *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*, that the Vairocana is depicting, but the *mudrā* of knowledge.[8] Could the four *mudrās* represent the 'Four Knowledges',[9] or the four variants of the *bodhyaṅgī-mudrā* as understood by the *sūtradhāras* working in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ?

Mudrās and *lakṣaṇas* of other Tathāgatas conform to the *STTS*. What is peculiar to note is that the vehicles (*vāhanas*) of each Tathāgata are shown in a mural outside the round *prabhāmaṇḍala*. In the case of Vairocana, two lions are depicted below each body, in an *antrapatra* (recess) on the *padma-pīṭha*.

Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Lokeśvararāja and Amoghasiddhi (Pls XII–XV) are slightly bigger in height than the accompanying Bodhisattvas (Table 3, nos 6, 11, 22 and 27). An elephant, the vehicle of Akṣobhya, is clearly visible on either side of his *āsana*; whereas the vehicle of Ratnasambhava is partially visible on the south wall. His yellowish colour and a *varada-mudrā* posture leaves no scope for a wrong identification. Lokeśvararāja and Amoghasiddhi are shown on the north wall. Shown seated in *samādhi-mudrā*, Lokeśvararāja appears in red colour and his *vāhana*, the peacock, is painted on his left side.[10] Amoghasiddhi appears in green colour with the right hand in *abhaya-mudrā*. Garuḍa or the fabulous bird is also painted on his right. All the Tathāgatas are



Pl. X Clay statue of Vairocana, displaying the *bodhyaṅgi-mudrā*, south side, gTsug-lag-khaṅ



Pl. XI Vairocana on the north side



Pl. XIII Ratnasambhava

adorned with numerous ornaments and the patterned lower garments. The depiction of the four *stūpas* on the lotus flower over the crown of Vairocana along with four lion-heads sprouting forth foliage is fascinating at Tabo, however, similar *stūpas* are also seen at Ropa. Could these four *stūpas* symbolise the four Pāramitās?

SIXTEEN BODHISATTVAS

Out of the sixteen Bodhisattvas, eight belonging to the family of the Vajra and Ratna, are fixed up high on the south wall in the 'Du-khan (sr. nos 4, 5, 7–10, 12, 13), and the remaining eight, associated with the



Pl. XIV Lokeśvararāja on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ



Pl. XV Amoghasiddhi

TABLE 3

Specific measurement data on clay sculptures, gTsug-lag-khaṅ, Tabo

Sr. No.	Sanskrit name	Tibetan name	Height (in cm)	Width (in cm)	Corresponding no. of the cycle of 37 deities	Remarks
1.	Vajrāṅkuśa	rDo-rje lcags-kyu	112	115⁺	**34**	
2.	Vajradhūpā	rDo-rje bdug-pa-ma	110	63	**30**	
3.	Vajralāsyā	rDo-rje 'dzin-pa	105	55	**26**	SE corner; *sgeg-mo* as given by Tucci
4.	Vajrasattva	rDo-rje sems-dpa'	125	62	**6**	
5.	Vajrarāja	rDo-rje rgyal-po	122	67	**7**	
6.	Akṣobhya	Mi-bskyod-pa	**132**	74	**2**	East; blue in colour
7.	Vajrarāga	rDo-rje 'dod-pa	117	61	**8**	red in colour; *chags* as given by Tucci
8.	Vajrasādhu	rDo-rje legs-pa	123	64	**9**	green in colour
9.	Vajraratna	rDo-rje rin-chen	122	62	**10**	
10.	Vajratejaḥ	rDo-rje gzi-brjid	117	56	**11**	crown broken
11.	Ratnasambhava	Rin-chen 'buyṅ-ldan	**125**	70	**3**	South; yellow in colour
12.	Vajraketu	rDo-rje rgyal-mtshan	124	66	**12**	blue in colour
13.	Vajrahāsa	rDo-rje bzhad-pa	120	62	**13**	white in colour
14.	Vajramālā	rDo-rje phreṅ-ba-ma	115	61	**27**	SW corner
15.	Vajrapuṣpā[a]	rDo-rje me-tog-ma	110	56	**31**	
16.	Vajrapāśa	rDo-rje zhags-pa	105	102⁺	**35**	yellow in colour



Pl. XII Akṣobhya on the south wall of the 'Du-khaṅ



Pl. XVIII Vajradharma and Vajratīkṣṇa



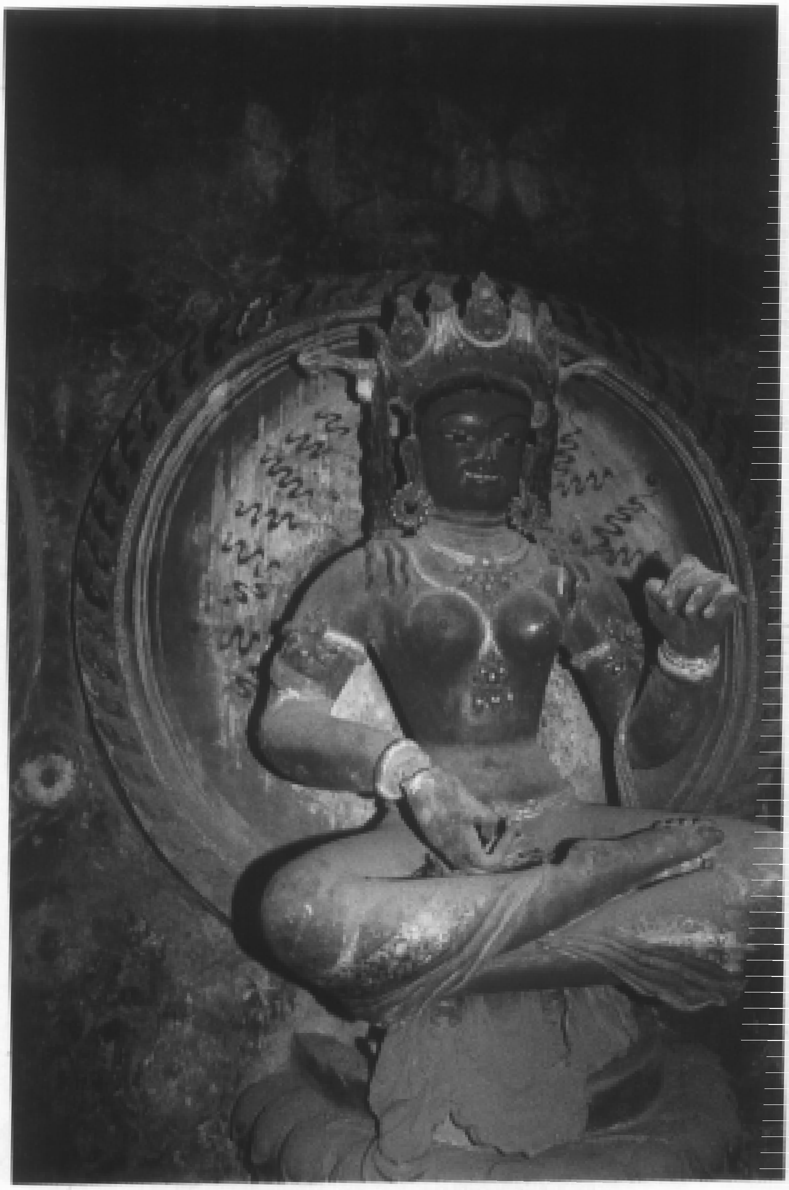
Pl. XX Vajrayakṣa and Vajrasandhi



Pl. XXI Vajradhūpā, the goddess of offering associated with Akṣobhya



Pl. XXIV Vajrālokā on the west wall



Pl. XXV Vajragītā

17.	Vajrasphoṭa	rDo-rje lcags sgrog	104	44	**36**	red in colour
18.	Vajrālokā	rDo-rje snaṅ-ba-ma	110	62	**32**	*mar-me* at fol. 36b 1. 8 for a Sanskrit Dīpā
19.	Vajragītā	rDo-rje glu-ma	116	66	**28**	NW corner
20.	Vajradharma	rDo-rje chos	126	64	**14**	red in colour
21.	Vajratīkṣṇa	rDo-rje rnon-po	130	69	**15**	blue in colour
22.	Lokeśvararāja (Amitābha)	sPyan-ras-gzigs dbaṅ po'i rgyal-po	**128**	64	**4**	West; red in colour
23.	Vajrahetu	rDo-rje rgyu	120	64	**16**	yellow in colour
24.	Vajrabhāṣa	rDo-rje gsuṅ-ba	125	69	**17**	equivalent to classical *smra-ba*
25.	Vajrakarma	rDo-rje las	118	65	**18**	crown totally broken
26.	Vajrarakṣa	rDo-rje sruṅ-ba	125	65	**19**	
27.	Amoghasiddhi	gDon-mi za-bar grub-pa	**135**	57	**5**	North; green in colour
28.	Vajrayakṣa	rDo-rje gnod-sbyin	122	70	**20**	central part of the crown broken
29.	Vajrasandhi	rDo-rje khu-tshur	130	66	**21**[b]	
30.	Vajranṛtyā	rDo-rje gar-ma	118	62	**29**	NE corner
31.	Vajragandhā	rDo-rje dri-chab-ma	118	61	**33**	crown slightly broken
32.	Vajrāveśa	rDo-rje dbab-pa	114	34	**37**	
33.	Vairocana (four-bodied)	rNam-par snaṅ-mdzad	125		**1**	Total height, from crown to the base of the throne, is 294 cm.

*Measurement with extended legs.

[a]This cannot be identified as Vajragītā as opined by Tucci (p. 69).

[b]Sculptural remnants of nos 22–5 do not survive in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, possibly represented by their symbols.

families of the Dharma and Karma are shown on the north wall (sr. nos 20, 21, 23–26, 28, 29). The first Bodhisattva (see Table 3) on the south wall represents Vajrasattva (rDo-rje sems-dpa') white in colour (Pl. XVI). From the position of his hands it becomes clear that he was holding a *vajra* and a bell. Next to him is Vajrarāja (rDo-rje rgyal-po), yellowish in colour. On the left side of Akṣobhya are Vajrarāga (rDo-rje 'dod-pa) and Vajrasādhu (rDo-rje legs-pa). The latter's green colour has faded and now looks slightly bluish.

Two Bodhisattvas (sr. nos 9 and 10) placed on the right side of Ratnasambhava can be identified as Vajraratna (rDo-rje rin-chen) and Vajratejaḥ (rDo-rje gzi-brjid)[11]. Those shown on the left side of Ratnasambhava are Vajraketu (rDo-rje rgyal-mtshan) and Vajrahāsa (rDo-rje bzhad-pa), in blue and white colours, respectively (sr. nos 12 and 13; Pl. XVII).

The first Bodhisattva (Pl. XVIII) on the north wall (sr. no. 20) represents Vajradharma (rDo-rje chos), red in colour, followed by Vajratīkṣaṇa (rDo-rje rnon-po). On the left side of Lokeśvararāja appears Vajrahetu (rDo-rje rgyu; the only Bodhisattva in the family of the Dharma shown in yellow colour), followed by Vajrabhāṣa (rDo-rje gsuṅ-



Pl. XVI Vajarasattva and Vajararāja on the south wall of the 'Du-khan, gTsug-lag-khaṅ



Pl. XVII Vajraketu and Vajrahāsa

ba). The last four Bodhisattvas (sr. nos 25, 26, 28, 29) belong to the family (*kuleśa*) of Karma headed by Amoghasiddhi. From left to right they represent Vajrakarma (rDo-rje las) with a broken crown (Pl. XIX, Vajrarakṣa (rDo-rje sruṅ-ba), Vajrayakṣa (rDo-rje gnod-sbyin) and Vajrasandhi (rDo-rje khu-tshur; Pl. XX). The attributes (*lakṣaṇas*) of all the Bodhisattvas are missing.[12]

Eight Goddesses of Offering

The *STTS* clearly distinguishes the correspondences of eight goddesses of offering from the four Tathāgatas. A set of two goddesses is related to each Tathāgata. Since they are arranged in the inner and outer circles of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, their combination with each associated Tathāgata, may be tabulated as follows:

(Inner circle)	Vajralāsyā (SE) +	Vajradhūpā	(outer circle)	= Akṣobhya
,,	Vajramālā (SW) +	Vajrapuṣpā	,,	= Ratnasambhava
,,	Vajragītā (NW) +	Vajrālokā	,,	= Lokeśvararāja
,,	Vajranṛtyā (NE) +	Vajragandhā	,,	= Amoghasiddhi

The above combination helps us identify each goddess depicted at Tabo with great precision.



Pl. XIX Vajrabhāṣa and Vajrakarma

Two goddesses (Pls XXI–XXII) on the eastern wall (south side) are identifiable as Vajradhūpā (rDo-rje bdug-pa) and Vajralāsyā (rDo-rje 'dzin-pa). Here, Vajralāsyā has been rightly moved to the south-east corner over which she reigns. Two goddesses associated with Ratnasambhava have been arranged on the west wall (Pl. XXIII). Vajramālā (sr. no. 4) occupies her assigned position at the south-west corner in the inner circle.[13]

The inner and outer circles of the north-west are occupied by Vajragītā (rDo-rje glu-ma; sr. no. 19) and Vajrālokā (rDo-rje snaṅ-ba-ma). Both goddesses (Pls XXIV–XXV) are red in colour and belong to the family of Lokeśvararāja (also in red). Two goddesses on the eastern wall (north side; sr. nos 30 and 31) unmistakeably show Vajranṛtyā (rDo-rje gar-ma) with a three-tipped *vajra* in her hand, and Vajragandhā (rDo-rje dri-chab-ma). Vajranṛtyā has retained her green colour; Vajragandhā, however, looks bluish as the thin coating of green colour painted over the blue surface has faded completely.

FOUR GUARDIANS OF THE GATES

The four quarters referred to in the *STTS* as four *dvāras*[14] are: Vajra-dvāra (*rdo-rje sgo-khaṅ*), Ratnadvāra (*rin-chen*[15] *sgo-khaṅ*), Dharmadvāra



Pl. XXII Vajralāsyā also associated with Akṣobhya



Pl. XXIII Vajramālā and Vajrapuṣpā on the west wall



Pl. XXVI Vajrāṅkuśa on the eastern wall

(*chos kyi sgo-khaṅ*) and Karmadvāra (*las kyi sgo-khaṅ*) belonging to the families of Vajra, Ratna, Dharma and Karma. Vajrāṅkuśa (rDo-rje lcags-kyu) is shown on the right side of Vajradhūpā (Pl. XXVI) as we begin to perform the circumambulation in the *maṇḍapa* from left to right. Vajrapāśa (rDo-rje zhags-pa; sr. no. 16), yellowish in colour, is placed above the eighty-three-line inscription inscribed at the southern terminus (Pl. XXVII). At the northern terminus, just in the front of Vajrapāśa, is placed Vajrasphoṭa (rDo-rje lcags-sgrog) who is the guardian of the Dharmadvāra. Vajrāveśa (rDo-rje dbab-pa), who protects the Karmadvāra is fixed onto the wall on a specially designed pedestal to the left of Vajragandhā (Pl. XXVIII). Before discussing the techniques of clay modelling, ornamentation and the art-style I would like to describe the deities of the second and third groups placed in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.



Pl. XXVII Vajrāpāśa on the south terminus



Pl. XXVIII Vajrāveśa



Pl. XXIX Amitābha seated on lions

AMITĀBHA AND HIS ACOLYTES

Three deities in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (sanctum)—Amitābha and two Bodhisattvas, Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta—along with Kṣitigarbha and Ākāśagarbha together form an independent group. They are, however, not related to the clay sculptures of the first group placed in the *maṇḍapa*.

Amitābha, red in colour, occupies a pre-eminent position on the lotus-*āsana*, supported by lions instead of peacocks (Pl. XXIX). He seems to be depicted here as the universal monarch of the celestial city of Sukhāvatī sitting in *samādhi-mudrā*, and for that reason the lions are substituted for peacocks. On his right stands Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara



Pl. XXX Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara

and on his left Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Table 4 helps us to know their location[16], height, *mudrā* or *lakṣaṇa* and *varṇa*, respectively.

Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara is shown in white (Pl. XXX). His right hand is in *varada-mudrā*, and the left hand perhaps once held the lotus flower as the position of his fingers would have us believe. Such iconographic characteristics of Avalokiteśvara are given in the *Niṣpanna-yogāvalī*:

Avalokiteśvaraḥ śubhraḥ savyena varado vāmena sarojadharaḥ /[17]

Mahāsthāmaprāpta, standing along the north wall of the sanctum, is blue in colour (Pl. XXXI). Of particular interest is his *dhotī* (the lower garment) showing murals of flying *siṁhas, gandharvas, kinnaras,*



Pl. XXXI Mahāsthāmaprāpta

TABLE 4

Measurement[a] of Amitābha and his acolytes, Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ, Tabo

No.	Name in Sanskrit	Name in Tibetan	Height (in cm)	*Mudrā* or *Lakṣaṇa*	Colour
1.	Amitābha	'Od-dpag-med	156	*samādhi*	red
2.	Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara	sPyan-ras-gzigs dbaṅ-phyug	214	*varada*	white
3.	Mahāsthāmaprāpta	mThu-chen-thob	213	symbols missing	blue
4.	Kṣitigarbha	Sa'i sñiṅ-po	192	r.h in *abhaya*[b] l.h in *varada*	yellow
5.	Ākāśagarbha	Nam-mkha'i sñiṅ-po	206	?[c]	yellowish or ochre-coloured

[a]All measurements are taken from crown to feet, excluding the *prabhāmaṇḍalas* and the *padma-āsanas* below their feet.

[b]Both broken arms have been rejoined, therefore, an exact *mudrā* of this Bodhisattva remains undetermined.

[c]The left arm rejoined.

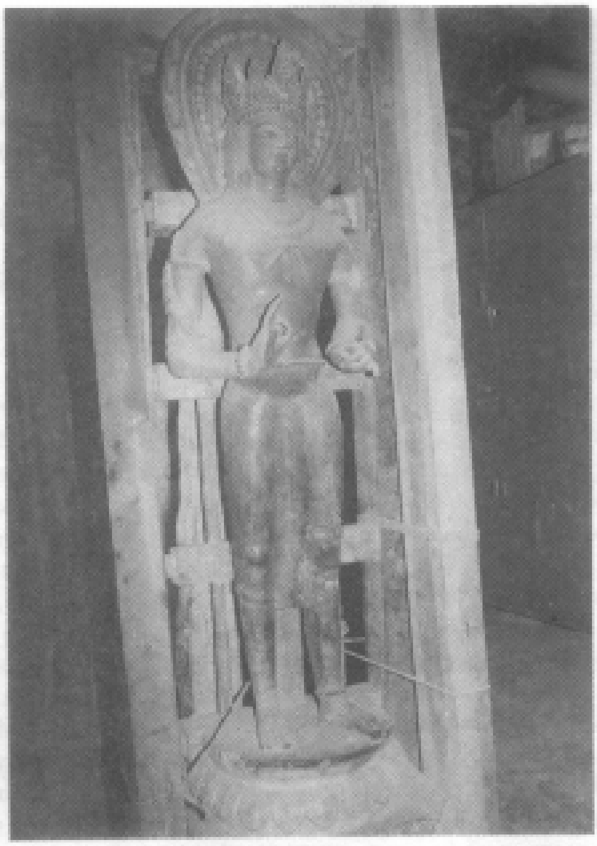
haṁsas and gajas. The peculiar types of knots have been used to tie the lower garments of both Boddhisattvas. Both his attributes are missing.

The depiction of Amitābha and his two acolytes in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ is based on the Mahāyānasūtra known as the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*.[18] Buddha himself manifests as Tathāgata Amitābha in this text. The interior decoration of the sanctum showing *apsarās, kinnaras, garuḍas, yakṣas, nāgas* and *devas*, to our estimate, corresponds to the description of the Sukhāvatī described by Buddha to Ānand as a place 'endowed with immeasurable good qualities and excellences',[19] and a place where 'there is no idea of others, no idea of self, no idea of inequality, no strife, no dispute, no opposition'.[20] Interestingly, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta are referred to as 'noble-minded Bodhisattvas'.[21]



Pl. XXXII Standing clay statue of Kṣitigarbha

Two other Bodhisattvas fitted into specially designed wooden frames are found standing on their lotus-pedestals at the intersection of the sanctum and the hall. There is no mention of these Bodhisattvas in the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*; nonetheless, the text refers to numerous Bodhisattvas residing in the 'Land of Pure Bliss'. A textual reference to Kṣitigarbha occurs in an inscription written below the pedestal of Vajrapāśa on the south terminus (Pl. XXXII). This long extract is culled from the *Kṣiti-garbha-sūtra*. We are of the opinion that the blank space on the right of this inscription was utilized for an extract perhaps taken from the *Ākāśa-garbha-sūtra*. For there existed no possibility of any space for this text to be written on the northern terminus beneath Vajrasphoṭa where a nine-headed mural has been painted. The crown of Kṣitigarbha is much



Pl. XXXIII Ākāśagarbha

damaged and possibly his *prabhāmaṇḍala* has been re-made because there are wide variations in the size and decorative scheme used in the crown and *prabhāmaṇḍala* of Ākāṣagarbha (see Table 5; Pl. XXXIII).

Two Guardians and Gaṇeśa (*sGo-khaṅ*)

Both guardian deities are damaged to such an extent that exact identification is quite difficult. They must represent Vajrapāṇi on the left side and Hayagrīva on the right side. These two custodians of the Buddhist faith appear regularly at places such as Ribba, Ropa, Tsarang, Lhalung and Chitkul. Vajrapāṇi is identifiable from his *mudrā* and colour. He is also wearing a snake-*yajñopavīta*. The red colour of Hayagrīva has



Pl. XXXIV Seated clay statue of Gaṇeśa

faded totally as a result of the percolation of water from the roofs. The flamed-*prabhāmaṇḍalas* of both deities are visible on the walls. Both statues have been retouched but it must be made clear that they were placed originally in the same positions as they occupy at present.

The photograph of the altar taken by Francke in 1909 shows Gaṇeśa (ht. 68 cm) along with the statues of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po (ht. *c.* 65 cm) in the *maṇḍapa*[22], but now the Gaṇeśa statue has been moved to the sGo-khaṅ, and is placed on the left side of Vajrapāṇi (Pl. XXXIV). The seated Gaṇeśa has two hands: the right hand in *abhaya-mudrā*, and the left holding a *pātra*. Traces of a triple-crescent-type crown, reminiscent of a Kulūta-type, is partially visible. He wears a long *mālā*, *keyūra* and a *hāra* (necklace). The other iconographic details are totally defaced.

TECHNIQUE OF CLAY SCULPTURES

Clay (*mṛt*) has been used extensively for sculptural decoration especially in areas where wood and stone were not easily available. A brief survey presented below is devoted to the study of clay sculptures of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur, in general, and Tabo, in particular. The following account is based primarily on an analysis of numerous clay sculptures of the early medieval period found at places such as Tabo, Lhalung, Gumrang, Nako, Ropa, Tsarang, Ribba and Thangi.

After deciding the size of a particular deity to be constructed in standing (*sthānaka*) or sitting (*āsana*) posture, a rudimentary wooden armature was prepared. In the formation of an armature, first two pieces of wood were joined together like an inverted T (Fig. 14, a) . Two pieces were added to the *vaṁśadaṇḍa* (vertebral column) at the level of the shoulders.[23] This practice has been observed by us at Gumrang. A vertical piece of wood (*upaśūla*) was used to fix the deity to the wall with wooden nails (*kīlas*) into it (Fig. 14, b). To fix the deity firmly onto the clay-plastered wall, two or three wooden nails were used at the back of the head, chest and the hip joints so that the statue would not bulge out with the pressure of the clay plastered on the wooden armature. On the completion of the armature, a locally available clay mixed with chopped grass or straw was prepared. We have seen the use of barley straw in an abandoned sculpture at Thangi.[24] At Tabo, a special grass known as *sipgya* procured from the Pin valley, has been used as a filling material for the limb of the statue.[25] A bundle of straw along with hair and flexible branches tied tightly with a rope is used for the armature of the limbs. The ropes were of two kinds: (i) those prepared from grass, and (ii)

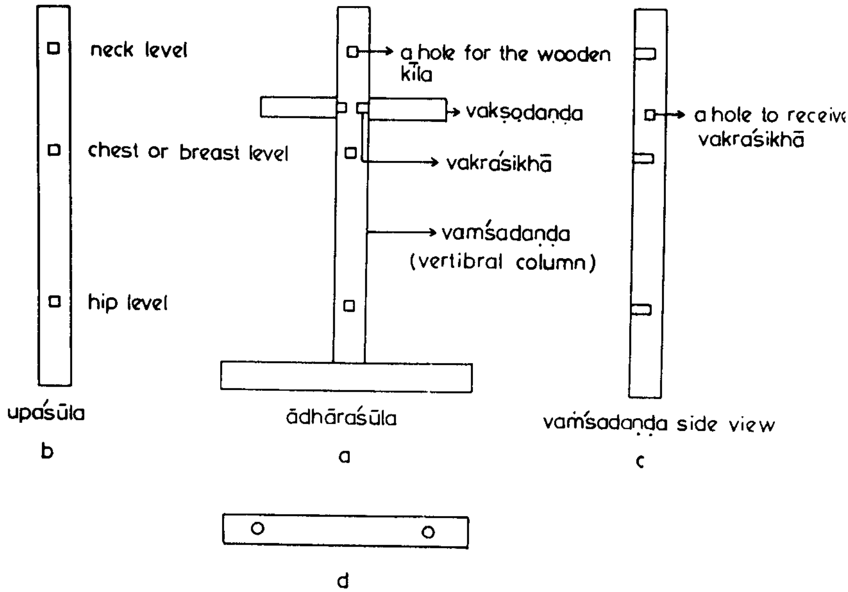


Fig. 14 Preparation of an Armature

animal skins.[26] The use of the latter has been seen at Gumrang. The use of the flexible bamboo sticks for *mālās* has been noticed at Gumrang.[27] For the long *vaijantimālās* slung around the body of the statue from shoulder to feet, the bamboo pieces are tied with the ropes of grass or animal skins, and, finally, plastered with clay. For designing the crowns, three small pieces of wood were fixed above the forehead so as to evolve a triple-pointed crown. After the finalization of the appropriate stance of a particular deity (sitting or standing) several layers of clay were applied until the artist was satisfied by his artistic accomplishment in shaping the deity to perfection. The last layer, undoubtedly, consisted of the finest clay, on which appropriate colours were applied according to canonical rules.

The huge wooden frames partitioned into five sections by inserting four wooden pieces between two vertical posts were used for two standing Boddhisattvas at the intersection of the hall and the sanctum. No such provision was required for the two other Bodhisattvas standing against the north and south walls in the sanctum. Four bodies of Vairocana are also fixed into a central wooden pillar (*vaṁśadaṇḍa*) with horizontal and vertical bracings.

MOULDS AND THEIR VARIETIES

Several combinations of moulds have been used to cast crowns, necklaces, armlets, waistlets, earrings and bracelets of the deities in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The U-shaped mould (Fig. 15, a) with suspended beads, shown alternatively, has been used for the *mekhalā* (waist girdle) of the Vairocana. Interestingly, the same design is used for the murals painted on the horizontal pieces of wood attached to the central pillar. One particular type of mould is used to cast the *hāra* (necklace), *keyūra* (armlet), *ekāvalī* (earrings of a *jhūmkā* type) and *nūpura* (anklet). For the four Tathāgatas, sixteen Bodhisattvas, eight goddesses of offering and the four guardians of the gates only one mould has been used for the *hāras* (necklaces), *keyūras* (armlets) and *mekhalās* (waistlets). The designs of the necklaces and waist bands differ considerably from those of the Vairocana, Amitābha and his acolytes (Figs. 15 and 16). Two varieties of

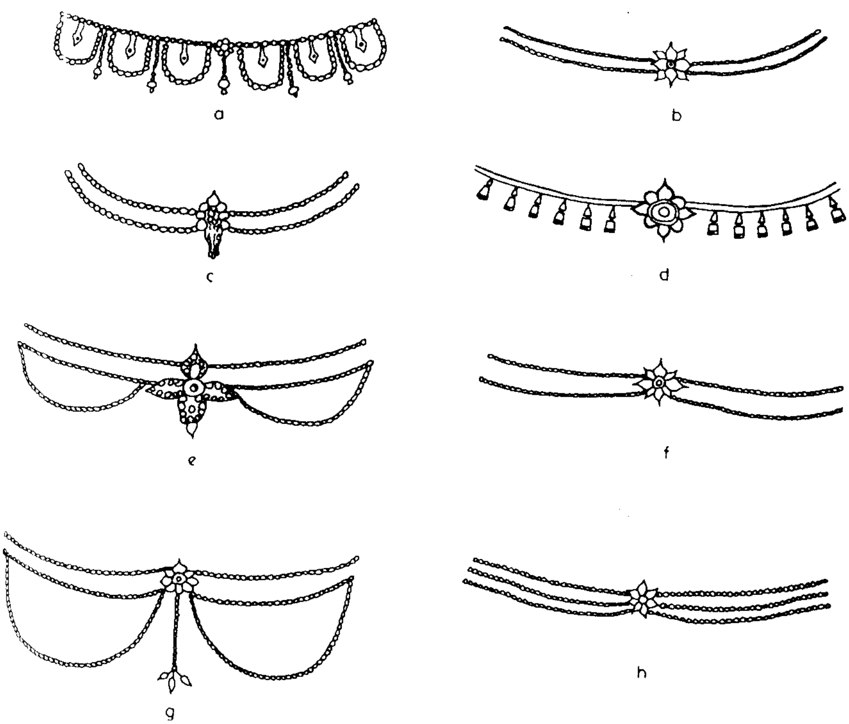


Fig. 15 Varieties of the *mekhalās* (waist-belts) depicted in sculptures from Himachal Pradesh

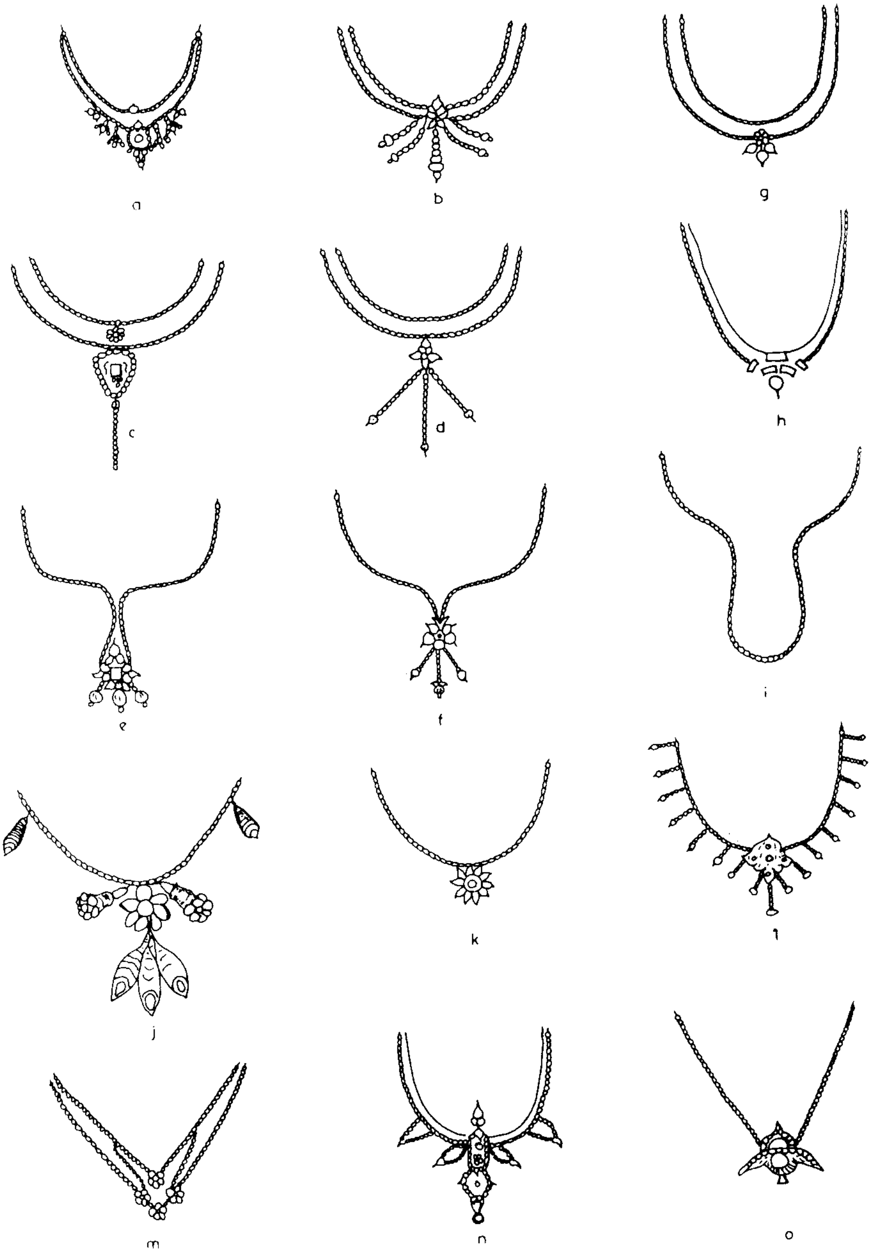


Fig. 16 Different type of necklaces in wooden and clay sculptures, Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur

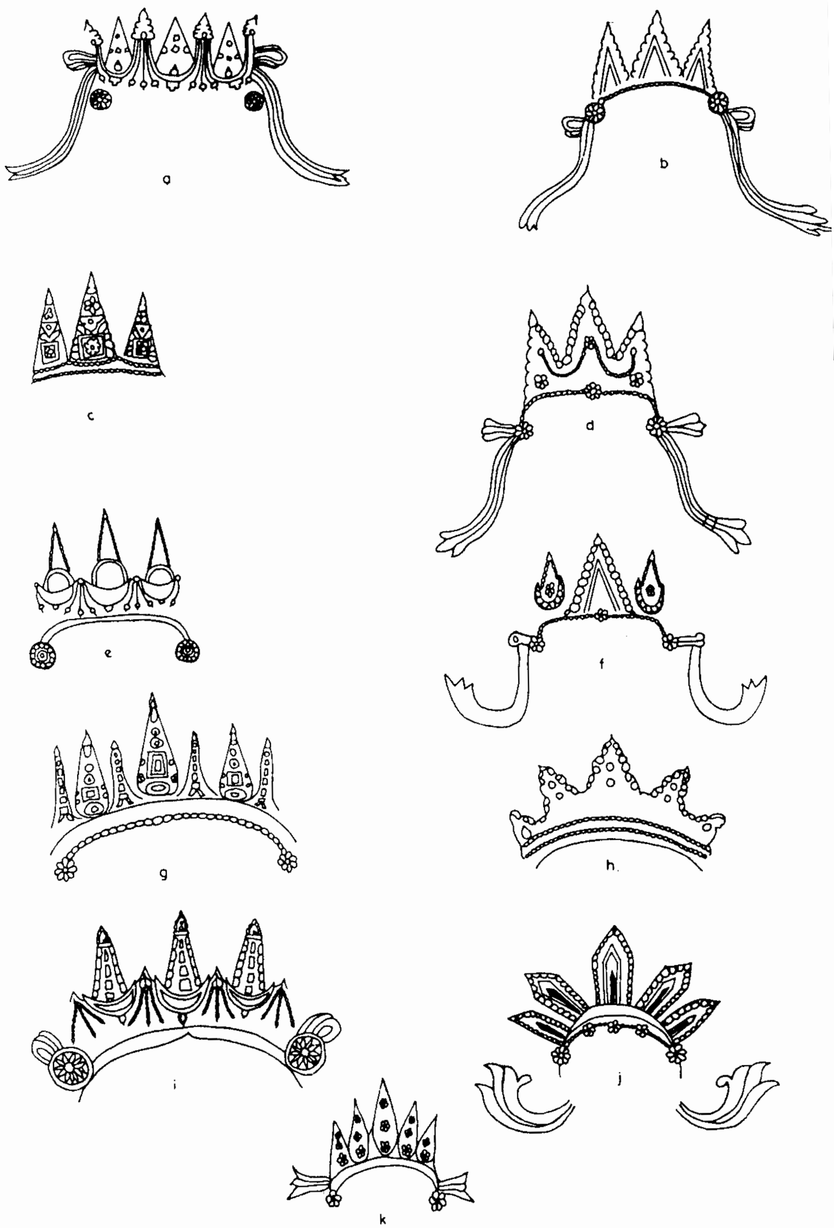


Fig. 17 Crown types: clay and wooden sculptures, Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur

moulds seem to have been produced by the artist working at Tabo for casting the long *mālās* of the eight goddesses of offering (Fig. 16, e, f). A long beaded *mālā* gently suspended between the breasts of each goddess has precious jewels at the lowermost end. One design has been used for the *mālā* of Vajradhūpā (Fig. 16, e), Vajrapuṣpā, Vajragītā and Vajranṛtyā whereas another variety with three drooping strings has been used for the *mālā* of Vajralāsyā (Fig. 16, f), Vajramālā (Fig. 16, f) and Vajrālokā; Vajragandhā's *mālā* is broken. Three or four moulds were used for the *mukuṭas* (crowns). The designs of the necklaces, armlets and waistlets of the four guardian deities are the same as those used for the sixteen Bodhisattvas and the eight goddesses. Each guardian deity is located in his assigned position according to a scheme explained in the *STTS*.

The crowns of Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha follow the same style and design which have been used for shaping the crowns of the deities in the *maṇḍapa* (Fig. 17). Their *mālās* and *mekhalās* follow a different set of moulds. Two sets of moulds were used for designing the necklaces of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and for Kṣitigarbha and Ākāśagarbha. The first set has two necklaces, the longer one with a suspended tassel of beads. The second set, too, has two necklaces the longer being a three-stringed one (Fig. 16, c, d). The central-rosette (buckle) has been omitted in the waist girdles of all Bodhisattvas, including the Tathāgata Amitābha enshrined in the sanctum. It seems quite possible that a mould used for the decoration of the *vaijantimālā* (partially visible over the shoulders) of Amitābha is the same used for the ear rosettes (especially of a *karṇaphūla* type) of some of the deities in the *maṇḍapa*.

What is clear from the above analysis is that a variety of moulds were used by the artists to facilitate the speedy completion of all clay statues. The artists were judicious enough to use the mould-types with suitable combinations to produce a variety of ornaments which looked impressive but not repetitive. In this, they succeeded to an astonishing extent to satisfy the spiritual and aesthetic cravings of their royal patrons and the guiding *dge-loṅs*.

THE CLAY BYAMS-PA (MAITREYA), BYAMS-PA'I LHA-KHAṄ

The only clay sculpture, other than those preserved in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, is a huge statue of Maitreya whose height is *c.* 5.55 m. Does this sculpture belong to a period when the foundation of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ was laid down? We cannot guess as not a trace of any mural has survived on the accompanying wooden frames. Maitreya appears in his

favourite *mudrā* which shows his two legs resting on the lotus-cushion. His hands are in *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*. The sublime outlook and the balanced proportions used for the physiognomical details have been abandoned. The complete absence of the sculptural features of phase I undeniably indicate that the Maitreya statue was remade during the second revival of Buddhist activity at Tabo in the fifteenth century or, possibly, a little later. It is very clear from an inscription preserved in the dKyil-khaṅ that the temple was dedicated to Maitreya (Byams-pa).

STONE SCULPTURE

MAÑJUGHOṢA

The stone sculpture of Mañjughoṣa (ht. 72 cm) was first noticed by Francke in 1909,[28] but Tucci has remained silent about it. The deity is shown in *padmāsana* like other clay sculptures fixed onto the *maṇḍapa*'s walls. The right arm is broken, whereas the left arm is slightly lifted, and possibly holds a book. He is decked with a *hāra*, *keyūra*, *kaṅgana* and a *vaijantimālā* which hangs down below his crossed-legs. He wears a triple-pointed crown omitting the inverted V-shaped element, and this is reminiscent of the Kulūta-and-Trigarta-type of crown.[29] Four figures appear above his tiara—two female figures on either side with the swinging bodies slightly leaning inwards, and two female figures in seated positions. An exact identification of each figure, however, has not been possible (Pl. XXXV). The peculiar absence of an ear rosette (*karṇaphūla*) above the ear is significant for assessing its possible date of manufacture. This statue seems to be a little later than the clay sculptures of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala discussed above. We would like to date it along with the stone bases carved during the second phase of architectural activity carried out in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba.

STONE BASES

It remains yet to be confirmed whether all the wooden pillars in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ had stone bases as supports because the majority of them are concealed beneath the cemented floor but a stone base below a wooden pillar in the *skor-lam* has sublime carvings on it. The carvings on four sides of the stone bases in the adjoining temples of Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba are better preserved showing the profiles of grotesque animals. The insertion of these granite square



Pl. XXXV Stone statue of Mañjughoṣa

bases at a later period, providing a strong support for the wooden pillars and the architraves resting over them, was unlikely considering the architectonic arrangement of pillars in both temples. The stone bases in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ have seated lions (37 cm by 24 cm) carved on its four-sides (Pl. XXXVI). A single stone base in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba has a carving of an elephant measuring 30 cm by 23 cm. The style and iconography of the lion is very close to that of the lions painted below the lotus-*āsana* of Vairocana in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The depiction of the the lion's jaw and claws are peculiar and prominent. The linear incisiveness of the body into two parts is remarkable; the swinging tail over the body is quite close to the tails of lions shown on



Pl. XXXVI Stone base showing carvings of lion, Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ

the murals. There is also the carved elephant in full running action. Both carvings, with their minor modifications, remind us of the art and style of the first phase.

WOODEN SCULPTURE AND CARVING

The number of sculpted wooden items or ruined architectural fragments from Tabo is not large enough to offer a comprehensive treatment on the wood-carving traditions. The recent discovery of numerous wooden sculptures from Ropa, Tasarang, Ribba (all in Kinnaur district)[30] and Gajan (Kulu district)[31] makes it possible to provide a new perspective on the wooden sculptures of Tabo and analyse them afresh. Our understanding of the wooden sculptural tradition of the western Himalayan region has also increased manifold since the time of A. H. Franke and G. Tucci.

TWO WOODEN BUDDHAS, GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ

Francke, while adding a brief note on the two wooden sculptures in question, has identified them as the standing Buddhas.[32] Tucci also holds

the same view. Both figures are shown in *sthānaka-mudrā*; the larger statue flanked by two figures and the smaller by a single figure. In both, the Buddha's body has a little bend at the level of the hip. The Buddha's right hand is shown in *abhaya-mudrā* (the gesture of protection) and the left hand grasps the drapery. The two smaller statues are shown in *añjali-mudrā*. The *abhaya-mudrā* gesture of Buddha happens to have been very popular in the areas of Lahaul-Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet during the tenth and eleventh centuries. We have discovered four bronzes of the Buddha, two each from Tashigang and Chitkul in Kinnaur district, showing him in identical *mudrās*.[33]

The theme and style of carving surrounding the central figure are important for analysing the options available to the artist. Three-leaved arch resting on two pillars with wickerwork knots in the shaft section reminds us of similar features carved on the facade of the Markulā Devī temple, Udaipur,[34] and the door of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, Tabo. Another example comes from Ribba in Kinnaur where an eleventh-century Buddhist temple provides new data for the study of wooden architectural traditions in Himachal Pradesh. Not only is the trilobed arch carved at Ribba on the lintel providing a shelter to the Buddhist figures but it has also been used for the side-windows below the triangular gable. This peculiar motif has also been noticed on many stone temples in Kashmir and its antiquity goes as far back as the fifth century AD.[35] The *takṣakas* (wood-carvers) of the former Chamba state tested its applicability in AD 700, under the supervision of the master craftsman, Gugga. A seated Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu figure, decorated by a trefoliated arch on the facade of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple, Bharmaur, confirms this.[36] Especially the pinnacle capped by a *kalaśa* (pot) and an exterior gable carved with little birds (perhaps peacocks) in the lateral corners of the two river goddesses shown at the entrance of the Markulā Devī temple's door bear close resemblance to those of the two Buddhas from Tabo. A bow-type element sprouting forth from the topmost canopy looks like a many-folded cloth. Such a decorative device is very close to the one shown on either side of the crowns of the clay sculptures in the 'Du-khaṅ (Fig. 22, a). The wooden frame carved around the figure of Amitābha at Tsarang also shows similar carvings. From the arrangements of the several wooden sculptures carved in relief on the door lintels of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, Markulā Devī temple and the Buddhist temple at Ribba, it can be argued that the two wooden Buddhas from Tabo essentially served an architectural function possibly on the ruined lintel of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ's door. Two graduations provided at the bottom of the

smaller statue seem to make it clear that it was fixed onto another wooden frame. Though both sculptures are now missing from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ (and can now only be seen in photographs published by Francke and Tucci); they can safely be dated to *c.* AD 1000.[37]

Two Wooden Portals

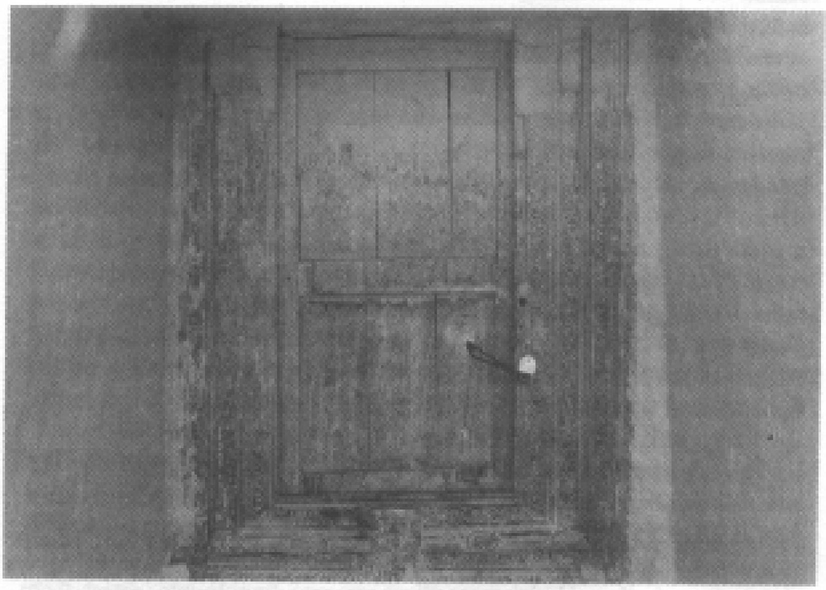
Both wooden portals belong to the second phase of the architectural activity at Tabo. Earlier I had argued that the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ's door is anterior to the door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. Chronologically the art activity of the second phase can be classified into two groups: IIa and IIb.

The entrance to the hall of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ is through an elaborately carved door. The jambs (*pedyas*) and lintels (*uttaraṅgas*) are arranged in a specific scheme of ornamentation and its door follows the ratio of 1 : 2 for its width and height proportions (see Table 3) as given in the Indian *vāstuśāstras* (Pl. XXXVII). Its jambs and lintels consist of five *śākhās*. The innermost two *śākhās* are carved with scroll work. The corresponding lintel has a seated figure of Gaṇeśa on the *lalāṭa-bimba*. The third frame is a *rūpaśākha*, showing six figures in standing and seated positions, on either side. They are so badly damaged that their exact identification is impossible. The corresponding lintel enshrines seven figures, each carved in a trefoiled arch. The same scheme of carving has been noticed by us at Ribba. The central figure represents Vairocana; both his hands are in *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*. Four smaller figures (all in standing positions) seem to represent the four goddesses belonging to the Vairocanamaṇḍala. The outermost frames again show scrolls of vegetation; in the centre of the fourth panel are carved two birds. The entire lintel has been carved with a chain of beaded half-circles clasping an *ardharatna* (half-diamond) design. Such a decorative element has been noticed on the girdles of the four-bodied Vairocana in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ and an architectural frame around it. A similar decorative motif has been carved repeatedly on the lintel of the Buddhist temple at Ribba. Its repetition, however, has been omitted on the door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba discussed below.

The wooden door of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba displays simpler carvings as compared to those on the door mentioned above (Pl. XXXVIII). It is divided into three *śākhās*: the outermost *śākhā* is sub-divided into two parts. The two innermost jambs are decorated with vegetation-scroll work whereas the corresponding lintels, apart from



Pl. XXXVII Minutely carved wooden portal of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ showing Gaṇeśa on the *lalāṭa-bimba*



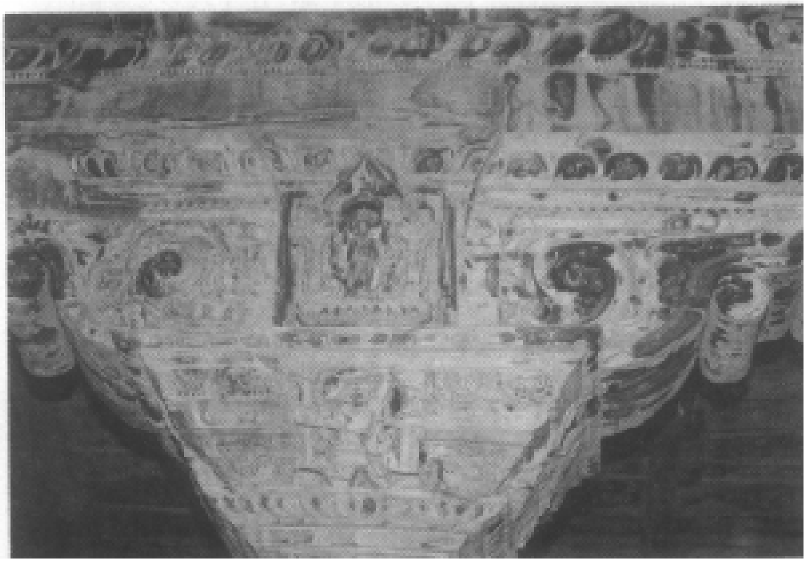
Pl. XXXVIII The wooden portal of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba

showing similar decorations, have on the *lalāṭa-bimba* a seated figure of Vairocana with his hands in *dharmacakra-mudrā*. The last frame is decorated with the *padmapatrīs* and *patralatās*. The corresponding lintel, on its central section, has two *apsarās* possibly garlanding a *dharmaśaṅkha* (conch-shell). The depiction of the conch-shell symbolizes the spread of Buddhist Law throughout the world. The same motif has also been carved at Ribba.[38] The peculiar absence of a trefoiled arch and a half-circled rosette seems to be an important criterion for fixing its tentative chronology. This door, to my estimate, seems to have been carved a little after the door of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, but, remarkably, it has retained the ratio of 1 : 2 for its width and height proportions. On the basis of wood carving details discussed above, both doors belong to the second half of the eleventh century; they are more or less contemporaneous with the Markulā Devī temple, Udaipur (Lahaul-Spiti); Dakhanī Mahādeva temple,[39] Nirmand (Kulu), and the Buddhist temple, Ribba (Kinnaur).

Wood Carvings in the gSer-lha-khaṅ and Some Related Problems

The study of the wooden sculpture and carving of Ṭabo would remain incomplete without describing the wood carvings on the four brackets in the gSer lha-khaṅ. Most of the polychromed carvings consist of the *padmapatrīs* in the outermost section of the horizontal brackets which support the wooden beams. The space for carving has been divided into three: the central horizontal niche carved on the eastern face of the northwest pillar has flower scrolls. Two peacocks are carved on either side with tails sprouting forth foliage (Pl. XXXIX). Below it has been carved a niche enshrining a seated figure (either Buddha or Amitābha). The western face of the same bracket has similar carvings with the difference that the three-flower scrolls appear on the upper section; the lower section has a similar niche sheltering a seated figure. Beaded half-circle designs on either side remind us of similar decorations carved on the facade of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ.

The carvings on the bracket of the southwest pillar are much more elegant but chronologically confusing. After the depiction of the *padmapatrīs* (lotus-leaves) at the highest level, the bracket enshrines a standing figure in a trefoiled niche. Two birds are carved beneath a triangular pediment which is capped by a *kalaśa* exactly in the style noticed on the tympanum above the two Buddhas from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ dis-



Pl. XXXIX Wooden bracket with trefoiled niche enshrining a standing figure, gSer-khaṅ

cussed earlier in this chapter. The carvings below are separated by a row of lotus-leaves followed by a half-circle as carved on the face of the north-west pillar.

The most fascinating is the presence of the three-leaved arch and a triangular pediment with birds at the lateral corners. Did this decorative device survive until the middle of the fifteenth century? Or, was an earlier carved piece of a dilapidated door re-used for decorating the bracket? The possibility of the insertion of this piece into the bracket at a later date is not likely because a special space has been provided by cutting the central leaf to provide an inverted V-type shape. I disagree with the idea that the foundation of the gSer lha-khaṅ goes back to the eleventh century.[40] Such an argument seems totally unconvincing because neither its plan nor any mural on its walls retain the slightest feature of an early art-style expressed so amazingly in the murals of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The most plausible explanation for the appearance of an early eleventh-century wooden sculpture in the gSer-lha-khaṅ is that it belongs to a group of wooden sculptures, including the wooden Buddhas noticed earlier by Francke and Tucci. One such piece seems



Pl. XL Bodhisattva in the roundel, ht. 8 cm

to have been re-used by the artisans while decorating the brackets of the Golden Temple under the dGe-lugs-pa's hegemony sometime in the mid-fifteenth century. The use of a trefoiled arch definitely ceased by the middle of the fifteenth century. It is unlikely that such a design was in vogue by the fifteenth century when the Golden Temple was completed. For the sake of argument one can ask a question: if the use of a triangular arch continued during the fifteenth century why did the artists working in the gSer-lha-khaṅ use this particular design only once? Surely, they did not use this motif for encircling the figures carved on the faces of three other pillars.

DISCUSSION ON ARTISTIC AND STYLISTIC TRENDS

By way of conclusion we add a brief note on the prevalent artistic and stylistic trends perceptible in the sculptures mentioned above. We are aware of the fact that the artistic survey would remain incomplete by leaving out the murals from such a discussion. Since the murals show many stylistic phases spread over a period of a thousand years they are analysed separately in the chapters that follow. The comparative chronology is, however, attempted in Appendix IV. Unlike the murals, the sculpture of Tabo can be broadly divided into four artistic phases. Such a categorization is based primarily on the style of a figure and its proportions, its compositional and figurative place in a specific iconographic programme, the use of a colour scheme and decorative devices, and a variety of ornamentation.

Phase Ia: 33 clay sculptures in the *maṇḍapa* of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

Phase Ib: 5 clay sculptures in the *antarāla* and the *garbhagṛha*, gTsug-lag-khaṅ:

Phase Ic: Two missing Buddhas, a wooden sculpture fixed on the bracket of a pillar, gSer-lha-khaṅ and an architectural fragment and a seated Boddhisaṭtva in the roundel.

Phase IIa: Carved wooden portal of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ.

Phase IIb: Wooden portal of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. The stone bases in the temples of phase IIa, b and Mañjughoṣa.

Phase III: Pillars and brackets in the gSer-lha-khaṅ. And possibly a retouched clay statue of Maitreya enshrined in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ.

Not only is each phase of artistic activity distinguishable by its peculiar stylistic characteristic but within each phase different artists' or groups' style can be differentiated. An eloquent example of collective work is clearly discernible in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ where a group of artisans produced thirty-three clay sculptures by using a set of moulds for similar ornamentation. The second group, however, worked independently in the sanctum and used slightly different combinations of moulds for elaborate decoration. The artists working in the *antarāla* and the *garbhagṛha* preferred a single-beaded *mekhalā*, *keyūra*, *valaya* and *nūpura* for Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Ākāśa-garbha and Kṣitigarbha instead of the double or triple-beaded. All the Tathāgatas (barring four-bodied Vairocana) and members of their families were encircled by a round halo. As it was not possible to bring the extended legs of the deities within the round *prabhāmaṇḍala*, the artists preferred to use upturned U-shaped halos for the four guardian deities and an oval-shaped halo for the four Bodhisattvas standing in the *antarāla* and the sanctum. They were able to evolve a variety of shapes according to the situation and the function. The artists provided a round mandorla with an oval-shaped halo around the central deity in the cella. The round full-lipped face with almond-shaped lowered eye-lids certainly restrict the glance at the tip of the nose. The eyes of the four Bodhisattvas belonging to phase Ib are open and facing the world. The crown worn by the clay sculpture (Fig. 17a) in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ became a precursor for the sculptural decorations in the western Himalaya in the period that follows. The design of such crowns did not evolve spontaneously for the artists combined two distinct types—triple-crescent and triple-pointed—available to them in the late tenth century AD.[41] By not taking into consideration the two extreme corners it becomes a five-pointed crown instead of a three-pointed one. The latter variety was also used for the crowns of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Fig. 17, c).

All male and female figures are expressive of frontal dimensions, dynamic vigour and muscular substance. The sculptures do not stand in isolation but are shown in juxtaposition with the murals. Every item of decoration is arranged with meticulous precision at an alloted place in the schema of iconographic programme. The arrangement of the folds of *dhotī*s below the crossed legs of each deity is genuinely remarkable; so also is the arrangement of the folds of scarfs spread over the shoulders of Vairocana. The vegetal scrolls and interwined ivy creepers constantly provide a background to both sculpture and mural. The lotus-leaves,

bhadramukhas and *patralatās* were the favourite choices of the sculptors working at Tabo.

The role of symbols and *mudrās* in Mahāyānic iconography cannot be over-emphasized. The *mudrā* of each deity has its specific meaning and a corresponding relationship with the *maṇḍala* to which it belongs. *Lakṣaṇas* are as much part of each deity's apparel as crowns, flowing scarfs, necklaces, armlets, girdles and garments. Iconography and its ritualistic prominence is based on the popularity of a specific Mahāyānic text expounded by a particular teacher and his followers. The artists' creation became a means of realizing the transcendental state of inner experience through depicting deities in numerous *mudrās* and assigning them an appropriate position in the respective *maṇḍalas*. In them are integrated the Oriental concept of cosmic manifestation through five Tathāgatas and their families. The sculpture at Tabo exhibited stylistic elements of several north-Indian art schools. This particular question needs to be discussed in detail so as to distinguish such art idioms.[42]

The emergence of an image at Tabo, essentially accurate in manner of communication and proportions, and pleasing in appearance, in fact, seems to have derived inspiration from the art schools flourishing in areas contiguous to Spiti. Numerous idioms of art become clearly distinguishable at Tabo. The majority of clay sculptures datable to AD 996 show the preponderance of the Kashmir and Champakā styles but Trigarta and the Kulūta elements too are noticeable.[43] The Champakā style, which derived its inspiration from Kashmir in the beginning of the eighth century or say *c.* AD 700, became a predominant art school in Chamba and Lahaul. Some influences of Madhyadeśa have also permeated through contacts via Trigarta and Kulūta. From the tenth–eleventh centuries onwards western India maintained regular contacts with Trigarta for we have ample epigraphic evidence to trace the Rajasthani and Gujarati links with the region.[44]

The hanging tassels of the *mekhalā* of Vairocana (Fig. 15, a), the central rosette of the waist-belts of other deities in the 'Du-khaṅ (Fig. 15, b) remind us of designs used repeatedly by the Kulūta, Kinnaur and Chamba artists with remarkable finesse (Fig. 15, f, g, h). The remnants of a round rosette in the partially damaged crown of Gaṇeśa are reminiscent of the decorative devices in the sculptures of the Kulūta region discussed by us elsewhere. The characteristic form of hair arranged in pleats, falling onto the shoulders was borrowed by sculptors of Kashmir from Gandhara art and subsequently Chamba artists used numerous ringlets of hair with provincial modifications. Five clay sculptures placed in

the *antarāla* and the *garbhagṛha* have numerous ringlets of hair instead of three as noticed in the sculptures of the *maṇḍapa*. This seems to indicate the involvement of two distinct hands or groups. Stylistically and iconographically, the date of these sculptures cannot be separated from the latter group belonging to the *kuleśa* of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala.[45] The entire plan was originally formulated between AD 996–1000 and there is no evidence to show that any clay statue either in the *maṇḍapa* or *antarāla* or *garbhagṛha* was altered from its allotted space or replaced.

Two missing Buddhas and a wooden sculpture fixed on the bracket in the gSer-lha-khaṅ stylistically belong to the Champakā style with a touch of the Kashmiri idiom. It is needless to point out that the wood carving details of two surviving doors (remarkably maintaining a ratio of 1 : 2) belong to phase IIa, b. Stylistic analysis makes it amply clear that the *takṣakas* borrowed heavily from the art traditions practiced in Chamba, Kulu and Kinnaur. Trefoiled art motif reached Tabo, and travelled even further east, from Kashmir via Chamba and Kulu, where such examples were already in existence. The style of Mañjughoṣa's crown represents a typical example of a Trigarta-type crown. Such types of crowns can also be seen at Gumrang in Lahaul (Fig. 17, h). It is clear from the pliable carvings surrounding the figure of Mañjughoṣa that accessories overwhelm the entire compositions with meticulous sumptuousness. The carvings of animals in profiles representing the same phase show the deflection from the convex to the concave. Though the sculptures of this phase were heavily influenced by the Champakā school of art they also show a mixture of eastern Indian (Pāla school) and western Indian (Gujarat, Rajasthan) trends. The sculptural productions of the phase III are very small but carvings on the pillars and brackets became repetitive showing the preponderance of local idioms emanating from the rural art centres located in Kinnaur, Simla Hills, Kulu and Chamba.

Sculptural productions of phase I at Tabo show the finesse of Kashmir,[46] Champakā and Kulūta[47] sculptures of the eighth through tenth centuries with the luxuriance and portliness of the Madhyadeśa as well as the late Gandharan elements. Occasionally epicurean elements are visible. Phase II and its sub-varieties depended entirely on the art idioms of Phase I with the difference that the 'medieval factor' had reached its climax with tendencies to absorb the 'local' traits. The latter, however, became a recognizable phenomenon in phase III. Surprisingly, the murals decorating the walls reveal a much clearer and fascinating visual story to which we turn in the next two chapters.

NOTES

1. It is astonishing to note that Francke identified a group of thirty-three clay sculptures in the 'Du-khaṅ as the thirty-three Hindu gods'; see Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, pt I, p. 38. However, in his editorial remarks, J.Ph. Vogel has rightly doubted the identification proposed by Francke. Equally doubtful identification has been proposed by Tucci. *See* his *The Temples of Western Tibet and Their Artistic Symbolism The Monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar* (Indo-Tibetica, III: 1), Lokesh Chandra et al. (eds), New Delhi, 1988, pp. 69–70, fig. 2 on p. 26.
2. For Tibetan text, *see* TT, vol. 4, fols 5a–26a, pp. 220–8; for Sanskrit text, *see* Lokesh Chandra, *STTS*, ch. I, pp. 5–33.
3. All six types of Vairocana *maṇḍalas* are discussed by Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet*, pp. 30–68; for a brief configuration of all six *maṇḍalas*, *see* Lokesh Chandra's 'Preface', to *Temples of Western Tibet*, pp. xxix–xxxiv.
4. Tucci, Ibid., p. 70.
5. *STTS*, ch. 1, p. 30.
6. Perhaps *dakṣiṇa* would make a better reading. In the *Niṣpanna-yogāvalī of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākaragupta* (ed. B. Bhattacharyya, Baroda, 1949, p. 44), while explaining the formation of the *bodhyaṅgī-mudrā*, the text says:

   vāme vajramuṣṭestarjanyā utthitāyā dakṣiṇe
   vajramuṣṭinā grahṇe sati bodhyaṅgīmudrā /

7. *See* TT, vol. 4, fol. 36a, l. 1.
8. The knowledge, *mudrā* of Vairocana is discussed by E. Dale Saunders in *Mudrā: A Study of Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture*, Princeton, 1985, pp. 102–7.
9. Ibid., p. 236, fn. 27, 'where the group of gestures called *shi-in* ('four *mudrā*') which symbolize the Four Knowledge'. For an alternative explanation, *see* Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Tokyo, 1962, pp. 31–2.
10. The peacock depicted on the right side is totally destroyed.
11. Ānandagarbha's *Tattvālokakarī*, a commentary on the *STTS*, has Vajrasūrya instead of Vajratejaḥ.
12. Two factors caused the loss of *lakṣaṇas* in the deities: first, the frequent earthquakes in the valley and, second, the destruction by the army of the Dogras in 1837 who damaged the limbs and attributes of the deities studded on the walls.
13. The location of the three goddesses of offering in a chart published by Tucci (*Temples of Western Tibet*, p. 60) is neither complete nor accurate. Vajradhūpā shown in the outer circle of the north-west corner has to be moved to the outer circle of the south-east corner, and Vajrapuṣpā placed

there has to be moved to the outer circle of the south-west corner. Subsequently, Vajradīpā should be placed at the corner occupied by Vajra-dhūpā. Tucci's chart is based primarily on *Tattvālokakarī* of Ānandagarbha but the corrections suggested above need to be done accordingly.

14. Lokesh Chandra, 'Preface' to *Temples of Western Tibet*, pp. 17–18.
15. Omitted in the Tibetan text, *see* TT, vol. 4, fol. 25b, l. 1.
16. The location of Kṣitigarbha and Ākāśagarbha in fig. 2, p. 44 of Khosla's *Buddhist Monasteries* is wrong. This has been copied by Deborah K. Salter in her many publications including in an article, 'Reformation and Renaissance: A Study of the Indo-Tibetan Monasteries in the Eleventh Century', in G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti (eds), *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicta*, vol. LVI, 2, Roma, 1987, p. 6, fig. 1. The wrong placement of these two clay sculptures continued as late as 1996; *see* Thomas J. Pritzker, 'Tabo Monastery: The Sacred Precinct', in P. Pal (ed.), *On the Path to Void: Buddhist Art of the Tibetan Realm*, Bombay, 1996, p. 75, fig. 7.
17. *See Niṣpannayogāvalī*, p. 58.
18. *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, ed. P. L. Vaidya, BST, no. 17, Darbhanga, 1961, p. 246; *also see* English translation by F. Max Muller, *The Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha*, *SBE*, vol. XLIX, Delhi, 1965, pp. 1–85.
19. Ibid., p. 44.
20. Ibid., p. 55.
21. Ibid., p. 52.
22. Francke, *Antiquities*, pl. XVIIa.
23. Sanskrit terminology based on the *Kāśyapaśilpa*, roughly a work of the twelfth century AD.
24. Some of the totally dilapidated clay sculptures, which originally belonged to a temple founded by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po at Thangi (Saṅs), are lying scattered near the Buddhist temple which was completed in 1989.
25. Locally it is known as the *sipgya* grass. We have not been able to trace its botanical name as yet.
26. The ropes prepared from grass were commonly used at Gumrang but we saw long ropes of sheep's skin used for tightening the material used for the limbs of the body. The use of animal hair has also been reported from Central Asia. *See* K. M. Verma, *The Indian Technique of Clay Modelling*, Santiniketan, 1970, p. 147. *Also see* his *Technique of Gandharan and Indo Afghan Stucco Images*, Santiniketan, 1987.
27. The bamboos seem to have been procured obviously from Kulu where they grow in abundance; *see* Alex Anderson, *Report on the Demarcation and Settlement of the Kulu Forests*, Lahore, 1886.
28. Francke, *Antiquities*, p. 40, fig. 3.
29. For examples *see* Thakur's *Architectural Heritage*, pls LXIX–LXX, LXXXVIII. And *also*, 'An Iconographic Study of Six Wooden Sculptures

from Gajan, Kulu District and Some Connected Problems', *South Asian Studies*, vol. 7, 1991, pp. 83–90.

30. A comprehensive study of these wooden sculptures is under preparation by the author.
31. *See* fn. 29 above.
32. Francke, *Antiquities*, p. 40, pl. XVIII; Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet*, pp. 89–90, pls XLVII–XLVII. How these pieces disappeared from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, however, remains a mystery.
33. For more details on the Tashigang antiquities, *see* Thakur, 'Report from Himachal Pradesh', *Orientations*, vol. 6, no. 5, May 1995, pp. 76–7.
34. Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, pls XCIII and XCIV.
35. For example, *see* Alexander Cunningham, 'An Essay on the Aryan order of Architecture, as Exhibited in the Temples of Kashmir', *JASB*, vol. XVII, pt 2, 1848, pp. 241–327, pl. XII; *also see* Michael W. Meister and M. A. Dhaky (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture: North India, Period of Early Maturity c.* AD *700–900*, Delhi, 1991.
36. Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, p. 91, pl. LXXXII.
37. We do not think that these sculptures were carved during the time of renovations completed in AD 1042. It would be safer to assign a period around the millenium. The Lamas of Tabo retrieved an architectural wooden frame from a *stūpa* in the complex measuring 101 cm by 15 cm by 8 cm. After examining the piece we found that one of the roundels has been decorated by a seated Bodhisattva figure (ht. 8 cm). Originally, the wooden fragment might have formed part of a doorframe or lintel of a *stūpa* (Pl. XL).
38. At Ribba, the chain of the *śaṅkha* appears on the doorjamb.
39. For the decorative details of the Dakhanī Mahādeva's wooden door, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, pp. 112–15, pl. CXI.
40. This idea has been propounded by Thomas J. Pritzker, 'Notes on the Evolution of Tabo's Monastic Complex', *Orientations*, June 1992, p. 86, fig. 12. The plan of the monastic complex published by Pritzker (fig. 1, p. 81) is not correct because the placement of all *stūpas* within the complex has been done arbitrarily. Also the plan of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ published by him ('The Wall Paintings of Tabo', *Orientations*, vol. 20, no. 2, February 1989, fig. 5 on p. 42) is wrong. The measurement of the north wall given by Pritzker is 12.25 m but should be 12.42 m; the northern wall of the circumambulation should be 6.48 m instead of 7.8 m, and the western wall 7.67 m instead of 7.5 m. For a detailed measurement, *see* Table 2 in ch. III.
41. Some early examples of triple-crescent and triple-pointed crowns can be seen in Kulu, Kangra, Chamba and the Simla Hills. *See* Thakur, 'An Iconographic Study', fig. 8, a, b, c, p. 89.
42. *Also see* Table 9 at the end of ch. VI.
43. For the essentials of these art schools, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*,

chs 6 and 8; the latter chapter summarizes the main features of temples and sculptures from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries AD.

44. Ibid., p. 19.

45. It is fanciful to speculate if the clay sculptures of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala were made in AD 1042. How could the artists have managed the arrangement of these sculptures on the walls of the 'Du-khaṅ? There is no evidence to show that the clay sculptures arranged on the walls in AD 996 either disappeared or were damaged completely.

46. For more details on the sculptures of Kashmir, *see* P. Pal, 'Bronzes of Kashmir: Their Sources and Influences', *JRSA*, Oct. 1973, pp. 726–49; 'Kashmiri-style Bronzes and Tantric Buddhism', *Annali*, vol. 39, 1979, pp. 253–73; *also Bronzes of Kashmir*, rpt, New Delhi, 1975.

47. For sculptures of Kulu and Chamba *see Architectural Heritage.*



V

The Vanishing Murals I: *c.* AD 996–1050

The varied subject matter of the numerous murals of the Tabo monastery can be classified into three categories: historical, narrative and devotional. The historical murals are seen in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, dKyil-khaṅ and the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ where several social categories of people of Spiti and other Himalayan areas are shown prominently. To the second category belong the narrative murals derived primarily from the Mahāyānic texts such as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra, Sukhāvatī-vyūha, Lalitavistara, Ārya-bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra, dPaṅ-skoṅ phyag-brgya-pa mdo* and the like. The murals belonging to the last category outnumber the other two. What I intend to present below is the processes of evolution of different styles characterizing their main features. The chronology and the emergence of mural styles at Tabo is slightly different from the architectural evolution presented in chapter III.

MURAL STYLE OF TABO

No Buddhist monastic centre in the western Himalaya is so large in size and so diverse in artistic creations as Tabo. G. Tucci who earlier studied the murals of the complex missed not only the murals of the mGon-khaṅ but also the majority of the murals in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

The purpose of devoting two chapters to the murals is fourfold:

(i) to identify the main themes or deities from the textual sources used by the Buddhists of Tabo for visual depiction;

(ii) to identify possible stylistic sources;

(iii) to highlight the main characteristics of each style and its legacy and

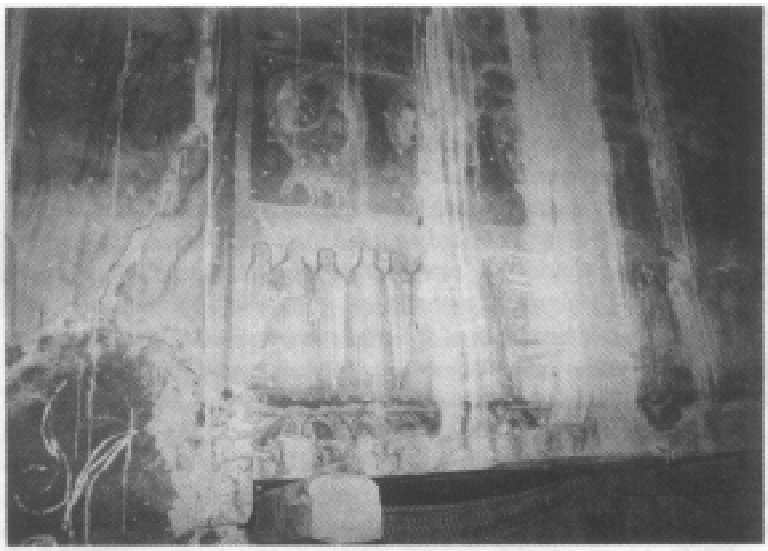
(iv) to suggest a reliable chronology taking into consideration the architectural evolution and epigraphic evidence.

MURALS OF THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ: STYLISTIC PARADISE

On chronological and stylistic considerations the murals of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ belong to six phases.[1] The gTsug-lag-khaṅ consists of three segments: sGo-khaṅ (*mukha-maṇḍapa*), 'Du-khaṅ (*maṇḍapa*) and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (*garbhagṛha*). The entire plan was formulated in AD 996 but the murals on the walls belong to two broad chronological periods (excluding those murals decorated in the beginning of the twentieth century). The murals of the sGo-khaṅ represents the earliest phase and is here called 'Style I'.

MURALS OF THE SGO-KHAṄ: STYLE I

Murals in the sGo-khaṅ have suffered an irreparable loss due to seepage of water from the damaged roofs. The subject matter of these murals is manifold. The north and the south walls show historical personages from differents walks of life. The western wall above the entrance has



Pl. XLI Wi-ñu-myin along with eighteen female attendants

a central deity identifiable as Wi-ñu-myin. She rides a Bārahsingā[2] (*Cervus duvauceli*) and is accompanied by eighteen female attendants, nine on each side (Pl. XLI). She is called the 'protectress of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ' in an inscription written below her *vāhana*. Above her in two rows appear the ten deities of directions. Several of them have been ruined beyond recognition. They represent:

Lower row (from left to right):

	deity	*vehicle*
1.	Indra or Varāhā	pig
2.	Īśāna	bull
3.	Yakṣa	horse
4.	Vāyu	deer
5.	Varuṇa	crocodile

Upper row (from left to right):

6.	Nairṛti or Rākṣas	corpse/man
7.	Yama	buffalo

8 and 9 are not recognizable, but may represent Agni and Āditya

10.	Indra(?)	elephạnt

The exact number of deities painted above the historical personages on the south wall is twenty-four—eight in each row. However, the number of such deities on the north wall could not be ascertained. What text or theme they represent remains yet to be identified. The fifth deity from the right side in the uppermost row represents a three-headed Gaṇeśa. Many of them are shown seated on coils of snakes. One of them sits on a pair of swans. Could they represent fifteen brahmanical gods and the nine planets? Twenty-four brahmanical gods also appear in the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. Since their number is twenty-four they cannot possibly represent the twenty-eight *nakṣattras* or lunar constellations.

The deities depicted on the north wall are seen riding animals which look very like deer. The eastern wall has suffered the most as no important deity survives on it. At the intersection of the eastern and the northern walls has been noticed a figure of Buddha in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā*. On his proper right is an inscription which has been culled from

the *Prātimokṣa* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.[3] On the lower section of the same wall is noticed the depiction of the Wheel of Life. The topmost section of all the walls has been decorated with rosettes—each revolving up and down alternately.[4]

Main Characteristics

A discussion on the main features of the Style I would help us to distinguish it from Styles II to VI depicted so magnificently in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. The most notable feature of this style is the use of the cape (a garment which hangs loosely from the shoulders to the ankles, open in the front) by eighteen female attendants of Wi-ñu-myin. The eighth female on the proper right of Wi-ñu-myin wears a feathered jacket (a similar jacket is worn by a nine-headed deity in the *garbhagṛha*). All the female attendants wear black shoes with toes slightly turned upwards. All historical persons painted on the south wall wear coats with open necks, and collars turned on the shoulders. Unlike the later murals of Byaṅ-chub-'od in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ no curtain or umbrella appears behind Ye-śes-'od and his two sons. The horizontal space which carries the names of seven *dge-sloṅs* in the first row has been divided into two parts above the figure of Ye-śes-'od and his sons. The upper section shows half rosettes and the lower has trimming bands.[5] Such bands are repeated with greater precision in the uppermost section on the walls of the *garbhagṛha* where the Thousand Buddhas are painted. No aura appears around the head of any historical person. What is interesting to note is that all the divinities depicted on the north and the south walls are shown seated (some in lotus *āsana*) on their respective vehicles.

De-ba-rā-dza, like other *dge-sloṅs*, is shown seated and he holds a rosary in one hand. It was not possible to ascertain whether Ye-śes-'od and Nā-ga-rā-dza also carry such rosaries. Ye-śes-'od's right hand is in *abhaya-mudrā* and his right leg is hanging from the bench-type seat. Nā-ga-rā-dza is also shown in similar posture but with black shoes. All the other deities are beautifully adorned with crowns, necklaces (depicted prominently), armlets, bracelets and anklets. The most fascinating feature of these decorations is the head jewellery (a stud of gold or silver on the forehead) used by the eighteen female attendants accompanying Wi-ñu-myin. The flower-patterned design on the *dhotīs* of many of the deities is comparable with those painted on the lower garments of the clay sculptures in the 'Du-khaṅ. What is missing in the

sGo-khaṅ is the use of the triple-pointed crown so popular with the artists later around AD 1040–2, in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. The most frequently used colours included blue, red, rose, yellow, white and black.

This is the earliest style used by the artists at Tabo. Most of the artists depicted local costume with meticulous care and were also familiar with the north-western stylistic traditions. No name of any artist has so far been noticed in the sGo-khaṅ. Monks might have helped the painters to complete the decorations in AD 996.[6]

MURALS OF THE 'DU-KHAṄ AND DRI-GTSAṄ-KHAṄ: STYLE II

A few fragments of the early murals commissioned by Ye-śes-'od between AD 996–1000 are visible below the row of the Thousand Buddhas in the *pradakṣiṇāpatha*. Otherwise, the entire pictorial scheme in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ was introduced by Byaṅ-chub-'od. Stylistic analysis suggests that the murals pertaining to the story of Sudhana (Nor-bzaṅ), the life of the Buddha, and the few narrative murals based on the Avadānas and the Jātakas in the circumambulation belong to Style II.

The murals pertaining to Sudhana's quest for the attainment of Bodhisattvahood is based on the famous and highly venerated Mahāyāna Buddhist work known as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*. This work belongs to the final section of the larger corpus known as the *Avataṁsaka-sūtra*. It is considered an important and illuminating work because it is believed to embody the teaching given by the Buddha Śākyamuni just after his enlightenment, and consequently his enlightenment is made the pivot of the Sūtra's substance.

Two complete translations of the *Avataṁsaka-sūtra* are available, one in sixty rolls (*chüan*) by Buddhabhadra and others of the Eastern Tsin dynasty (AD 317–420), and the second in eighty rolls by Śikṣānanda (AD 652–710) of the T'ang dynasty (AD 618–707). The latter is a fuller translation of the earlier sixty-roll volume translated by Buddhabhadra. This edition has two imperial prefaces, one by Khaṅ-tsu the ruler of the Ming dynasty, and the other by the empress Wu Tsö-thien (AD 684–705) of the T'ang dynasty. The latter sent a special envoy to Khotan to procure a Sanskrit text of the Sūtra.

A forty-roll volume translated by Master Prajñā (AD 796–8) of the T'ang dynasty corresponds to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. It is called *Fugengyōgwanbon* in Japanese, 'Practice and Vows of Samantabhadra'.

Bunyiu Nanjio informs us that the forty-roll volume translated into Chinese by Prajñā was made from the personal copy of the king of Orissa who gifted it to the Chinese emperor in AD 795.[7] It is extremely important to note that the Chinese translation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* follows the Sanskrit text and preserves an essentially accurate transmission of the Sūtra over the centuries.

The murals and the inscriptional excerpts culled from the Tibetan text of the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* preserved at Tabo will be analysed in a volume entirely devoted to them, but we could briefly summarise the visual scheme depicted on the eastern, southern and western walls of the 'Du-khaṅ.

Beneath Vajrāṅkuśa begins the murals of Sudhana's pilgrimage where an eighteen-line inscription gives an account of Sudhana's meeting with Mañjuśrī (Pl. XLII). From this inscription onwards until the completion of the story on the western wall relating to 'Samantabhadra-caryāpraṇidhāna', i.e. the meditation on the course of conduct prescribed by Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, a total length of 18 metres is occupied. After a careful study of all surviving murals and the Tibetan inscriptions, it becomes clear that the artists have tried to depict at least one scene related to each Kalyāṇamitra. Each Kalyāṇamitra instructed Sudhana



Pl. XLII Sudhana meets Mañjuśrī, eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ

how to achieve an entry into the Dharmadhātu. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī play most important roles—the former representing practice (*caryā*) and the latter wisdom (*prajñā*). Murals and inscriptions from Kalyāṇamitras 31 to 39 are totally damaged, and from 40 to 47 (Sutejomaṇḍalaratiśrī to Muktāsāra) are partially so.[8] The Tibetan inscription narrating the last scene is totally defaced.

Among the Kalyāṇamitras whom Sudhana met were four Bodhisattvas (excluding Samantabhara), five monks, one nun, two perfume sellers, one fisherman, two kings, nine laywomen, seven householders, two teachers, one god, ten goddesses, two brāhmaṇs, a mendicant, a goldsmith, a seer and four children. The last mural of this frieze is based on the ten vows of Samantabhadra and the desire to be born into Sukhāvatī (Pure Land). The ten vows of Samantabhadra form the very basis of the Bodhisattva's life in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The central theme of this Sūtra is enlightenment and it lays emphasis on the fact that all beings can be reborn in the house of the Buddha if they obtain enlightenment.

The western, southern and eastern walls (approximately 16.45 metres) have miniature paintings showing the Acts of the Buddha. A few early episodes in the Buddha's life are preserved on the west and the north walls as is the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa* on the west wall. All other murals have perished beyond recognition. Unfortunately not a single inscription is preserved, and, therefore, the actual Buddhist work used for the visual depiction of the life of the Buddha remains unidentified. Stylistically these murals are contemporaneous with those of the Nor-bzaṅ story.

The first scene of the Buddha's life is painted below the lotus-pedestal of Vajrālokā on the western wall of the 'Du-khaṅ. It depicts the Buddha-to-be-Śākyamuni in the Tuṣitaloka. Two seated figures seem to depict the same Bodhisattva. The lower and larger figure is addressing the congregation of gods, while the upper, smaller, figure is handing over a crown to Maitreya who is sitting on his left.[9] This scene is connected to another scene through a white elephant with a red head shown dissolving into the clouds.[10] The next scene is divided into two parts. One shows two excellent apartments of Śuddhodana's palace fully adorned with flowers where queen Māyā's conception takes place. She is shown surrounded by numerous female attendants. This seems to depict the Aśoka-vāṭikā (Aśoka's garden).[11] The other on the left is the narration of the dream by Māyā to Śuddhodana. The entire palace is guarded by numerous courtiers who wear flat hats (Fig. 18).

The focus of the composition in the next scene is the chariot of Māyā drawn by four horses. Several contingents of Śuddhodana's army - cavalry, elephants, chariots and infantry are shown moving towards Lumbinī.[12] The entire scene is realistic and full of movement. Numerous musicians playing the rhythmic tunes with instruments such as *tūṇa, paṇava, mṛdaṅga, vīṇā, veṇu* and *mukuṇḍa* (*tūṇapaṇa-vamṛdaṅgā vīṇaveṇumukuṇḍaṁ*) lead the procession.[13] Māyā is shown standing beneath a Plakṣa tree touching one of its swinging branches with her right arm.[14] Seated on the branches are Apsarās of Kāmadhenu. Near the stem of Kāmadhenu tree is shown a standing figure holding the Buddha on his two outstretched hands.[15] Very few fragments of the murals have survived on the north wall. One of the last panels related to the *mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha survives on the northern corner of the east wall. A few Jātaka stories are painted on the dado section of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* and also on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ.

It is extremely difficult to suggest a possible literary source used by the artists for the pictorial narration of the life of the Buddha. Scenes of the Buddha-to-be-Śākyamuni in the Tuṣita Heaven, addressing the assembly of gods, and passing the crown to Maitreya, are inspired by the *Lalitavistara*. The description of Māyā's dream and the royal procession leading to Lumbinī grove are also given in the *Lalitavistara*. The last scene, however, is not based on the text referred to above for it does not contain a chapter on the Buddha's *mahāparinirvāṇa*. Was it therefore possible that the artists used some other Buddhist text for the last scene? It seems to have been inspired by either *Buddhacarita* or *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*.[16] We think that it was the latter work which was also added as cantos XII to XXVII to the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Buddhacarita*.[17]

Characteristics of Style II

Indisputably, the murals on the four walls of the 'Du-khaṅ beneath the *āsanas* of the clay deities, were painted by a single group of painters sometime before the completion of decorations on the walls of the *garbhagṛha* and the topmost sections of the 'Du-khaṅ. No multi-armed and multi-headed deity appears in Style II.[18] The optimum use of *prabhāmaṇḍala* for historical personages such as Māyā and Śuddhodana has been made. A peculiar form of umbrella has been used for prominent personalities like Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Māyā, Śuddhodana and Śākya-muni (Pl. XLIII).



Pl. XLIII Buddha descending from the heavenly world to Saṁkāśya followed by the gods, eastern wall

The story of Sudhana is set in the Dakṣiṇāpatha and the life of the Buddha around the regions of Magadha and Madhyadeśa. The painters have beautifully depicted the trees of the tropical forests with branches turned downwards. Such trees are not seen in Styles I and II. Not all buildings painted in the murals are fully preserved but the surviving evidence suggests that the craftsmen involved in the decorations were familiar with at least three types of structures: (i) flat-roofed buildings so peculiar to the western-Himalayan areas such as Ladakh, Spiti, Lahaul and Kinnaur; (ii) the pent-roofed buildings covered with the wooden shingles and eaves decorated with the hanging wooden bobbins all around, and iii) the mixture of the pent-roofed and the *nāgara* style (Pl. XLIV). Two celestial *kūṭāgāras* painted on either side of an opening leading to the cella undeniably show the hands of the same master in both scenes. The use of *āmalaka* covering for both palaces suggests that the painter was familiar with the *nāgara* temples which are covered with such devices. Apart from the monkeys, deer, birds and peacocks, the decoration of the heavenly palaces seems to confirm the work of the same artists. The round pillars with rectangular capitals and brackets



Pl. XLIV Sudhana meets Muktaka in his pent-roofed palace

resting on them carry above them the arched *toraṇas* beautifully adorned with the wooden bobbins, lotuses and perforated laths. The central section of the palace is decorated with a *bhadramukha* (a lion's face) with suspended tassels sprouting from the mouth.

A variety of hats worn by the divine and the ordinary people form an interesting study (Fig. 18). The majority of the Kalyāṇamitras wear flat hats. What is interesting to note is that a Kalyāṇamitra who belongs to the category of Bodhisattva is depicted either with a pointed crown or with a bare head.[19] A special type of hat is worn by the courtiers of Śuddhodana and Śivarāgra. The peculiar feature of such hats is that a scarf is shown dropping over the chin and usually falls over the broad shoulders.

Sudhana's attire normally consists of a long gown fastened at the waist by a woollen belt. The sky blue or black collars are usually turned on the shoulders, and his shoes are black. Sudhana appears in kneeling, walking and sometimes in standing positions as the situation demands. Only profiles of the others are shown whether they be gods, Bodhisattvas or ordinary people. Indian and Tibetan costumes are worn by

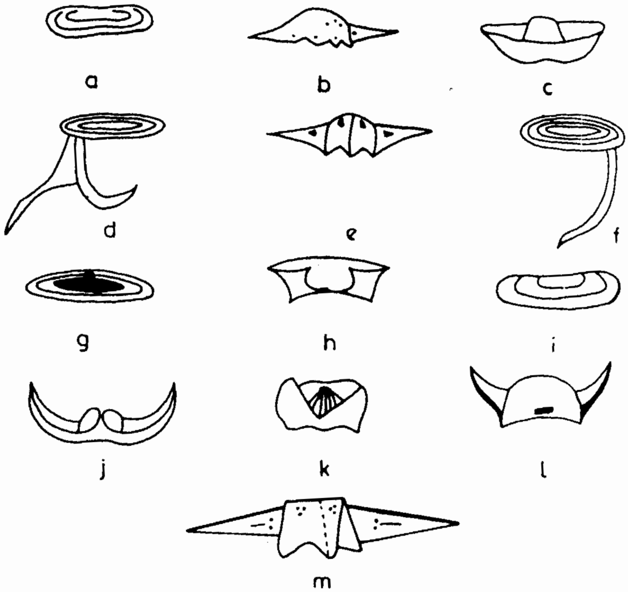


Fig. 18 Hat types depicted on the murals of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ

several groups of people. Over-ornamentation has been avoided to a great extent. Double or triple-pointed crowns of the divine figures are always encircled by an oval-shaped nimbus. In such cases, where nimbus and aura both are depicted, the nimbus falls within the round mandorla (see Vairocana and Samantabhadra). Due to the paucity of space the figures are not well proportioned. The scarcity of space resulted in the artists abandoning the idea of providing identification for each Kalyāṇamitra. Such a piquant situation forced the artists to paint more than one Kalyāṇamitra in one composition (e.g. Avalokiteśvara and Ananyagāmī). A rosette fills up blue blank spaces interspersed between inscriptions, palatial houses and murals. Open and closed doors are integral to each Kalyāṇamitra's palace but its apartments, walls, roof tops are provided with conical, rectangular, square and diamond-shaped apertures. The murals of the Style II can be dated to the beginning of AD 1040.

Murals of the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ: Style III

The evolution of certain iconographic features and the stylistic trends perceptible in the murals of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ indicate that the

pradakṣiṇāpatha's murals were painted after those discussed above in Style II. They included the Thousand Buddhas, sixteen Bodhisattvas, an equal number of Mahābodhisattvas, eight Buddhas and their acolytes.

The murals of the Thousand Buddhas on the four external walls of the *garbhagṛha* are remarkably well preserved.[20] The largest number painted on the western wall contain fourteen rows, each with twenty-one Buddhas. Thus the total number comes to two hundred and ninety-four figures (Pl. XLV). The north and the south walls, however, have sixteen Buddhas in each row. Twenty Buddhas are painted on the uppermost register of the north and the south walls in the circumambulation; however, the western wall, which is the largest, contains twenty-four. The artists wanted each Buddha to be provided with his name but the original idea was abandoned and only three rows were provided with the names of the Buddha. That each Buddha wears a different monastic robe is remarkable. Before discussing the eight Buddhas and their acolytes depicted on the western wall I would like to discuss the first group of Bodhisattvas and Mahābodhisattvas painted on the south and the north walls of the *skor-lam*. A rectangular yellow space has been provided on either side of each figure for inscriptions. The space on the right side



Pl. XLV The Thousand Buddhas on the external wall of the sanctum

remains blank in every case. Listed below are the transcriptions of the names of the Bodhisattvas which correspond to the numbers as arranged in the middle register of the south wall.

	Lion-faced kīrttimukhas	top row
	Twenty Buddhas of Bhadrakalpa	upper register
8	7 6 5 4 3 2 1	middle register
8	7 6 5 4 3 2 1	
	Stories of Buddha’s former births	lower register
	Flower decorations of AD 996	dado

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ 〈 xxxxxxxxxxx.*|| 〉
2. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ .|. Kun tu bzaṅ po. || ||
3. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ Zla’od gzho ** nur gyurd pa. ||
4. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ bZaṅ skyoṅ. ||
5. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ [xxxxxxx *** ||]
6. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ rDo rje sñiṅ po. ||
7. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ Nam ka mdzod. ||
8. Inscription is totally defaced, perhaps it represents ’Od dpag myed.

* dPa’-ba ’gro-ba.

** Correct form would be gzhon-nur.

*** Dra-ba-can-gyi-’od.

Similarly, the Bodhisattvas on the north wall, can be arranged from left to right, as shown below.

Lion-faced kīrttimukhas		top row
Twenty Buddhas of Bhadrakalpa		upper register
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8	middle register
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8	
Stories of Buddha’s former births		lower register
Flower decorations of AD 996		dado

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ 〈 xxxxx.*|| 〉
2. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ Mya ṅan kun ’joms. || ||
3. Byaṅ chub sems dpa’ sPyobs pa brtsegs po. ||

4. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' Blo gros myi bzad pa. ||
5. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' Byams pa. || ||
6. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sPos kyi glaṅ po. || || || ||
7. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' [xx]** Soṅ kun 'drens pa. || ||
8. Inscription defaced, perhaps it represents Don yod grub pa.

* Ye-śes-tog.

** Ṅan before soṅ illegible.

The central question which remains yet to be resolved satisfactorily is the textual source which has been used by the artists working at Tabo for the series of the Bodhisattvas. There are numerous Buddhist sources which enumerate the sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa in sets of four. The names given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*,[21] *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra*[22] and the *rGyud-sde kun-btus*[23] deserve immediate notice.

The names of the sixteen Bodhisattvas extracted from the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (Table 5) show that they are described in four different *maṇḍalas* known as the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, Mañjuvaramaṇḍala, Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala and the Durgatipariśodhanamaṇḍala. In every *maṇḍala* they appear in sets of four beginning with east (1–4), south (5–8), west (9–12) and north (13–16), respectively. The names and the directions of the Bodhisattvas given in the Vajradhātumaṇḍala are the same as those given in the Durgatipariśodhanamaṇḍala, beginning with Maitreya and concluding with Samantabhadra. The position of Jālinīprabha remains unchanged as he appears in the twelfth position in every *maṇḍala*. The list of the Bodhisattvas given in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* corresponds to the names listed in chapter 22 of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (Table 5, col. 4). This list seems to be the one depicted at Tabo, in a completely changed order however. This order largely conforms to the one listed in the Tibetan work, *rGyud-sde kun-btus*, which is directly related to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* (Table 6). The names of four Bodhisattvas, two each from the north and the south walls, are illegible. The missing names are possibly of Śūraṅgama and Amṛtaprabha on the south wall, and Jñānaketu and Amoghadarśin on the north. The identification of Śūraṅgama is confirmed as he holds a sword in his right hand. Some minor differences also exist between the order of the Bodhisattvas as given in the *rGyud-sde kun-btus* and those painted at Tabo. For example, the artists at Tabo painted rDo-rje sñiṅ-po (Vajragarbha) after Dra-ba-can-gyi-'od (Jālinīprabha) followed by Nam-mkha'-mdzod (Gagangañja).

TABLE 5
The Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa based on the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, Chapters 19, 20, 21 and 22.

Sr. No.	Vajradhātumaṇḍala	Mañjuvaramaṇḍala	Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala	Durgatipariśodhana-maṇḍala
1.	Maitreya	Maitreya	Samantabhadra	Maitreya
2.	Amoghadarśin	Mañjuśrī	Akayamati	Amoghadarsin
3.	Sarvāpāyañjaha	Gandhahastin	Kṣitigarbha	Sarvāpāyañjaha
4.	Sarvaśokatamo-nirghātamati	Jñānaketu	Ākāśagarbha	Sarvaśokatamo-nirghātamati
5.	Gandhahastin	Bhadrapāla	Gagangañja	Gandhahastin
6.	Śulaṅgama	Sāgaramati	Ratnapāṇi	Suraṅgama
7.	Gagangañja	Akayamati	Sāgaramati	Gagangañja
8.	Jñānaketu	Pratibhānakuṭa	Vajragarbha	Jñānaketu
9.	Amitaprabha	Mahāsthāmaprāpta	Avalokiteśvara	Amṛtaprabha
10.	Candraprabha	Sarvāpāyañjaha	Mahāsthāmaprāpta	Candraprabha
11.	Bhadrapāla	Sarvaśokatamo nirghatamati	Candraprabha	Bhadrapāla
12.	Jālinīprabha	Jālinīprabha	Jālinīprabha	Jālinīprabha
13.	Vajragarbha	Candraprabha	Amitaprabha	Vajragarbha
14.	Akṣayamati	Amitaprabha	Pratibhānakūṭa	Akṣayamati
15.	Pratibhānakūṭa	Gagangañja	Sarvaśokatamo-nirghātamati	Pritibhānakūṭa
16.	Samantabhadra	Sarvanivaraṇa-viśkambhin	Sarvanivaraṇa viśkambhin	Samantabhadra

In Table 6, Vajragarbha appears after Gagangañja. On the north wall Ye-śes-tog seems to be the first Bodhisattva to be painted but he appears at number 10 after Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati. Also Sarvāpāyañjaha and Gandhahastin (Table 6, nos 14–15) are shown in reversed order at Tabo. What relationship they have with the sixteen Mahābodhisattvas painted below them in the lower register remains yet to be established firmly (Pl. XLVI).

TABLE 6

The Sixteen Bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa based on the *rGyud-sde kun-btus*

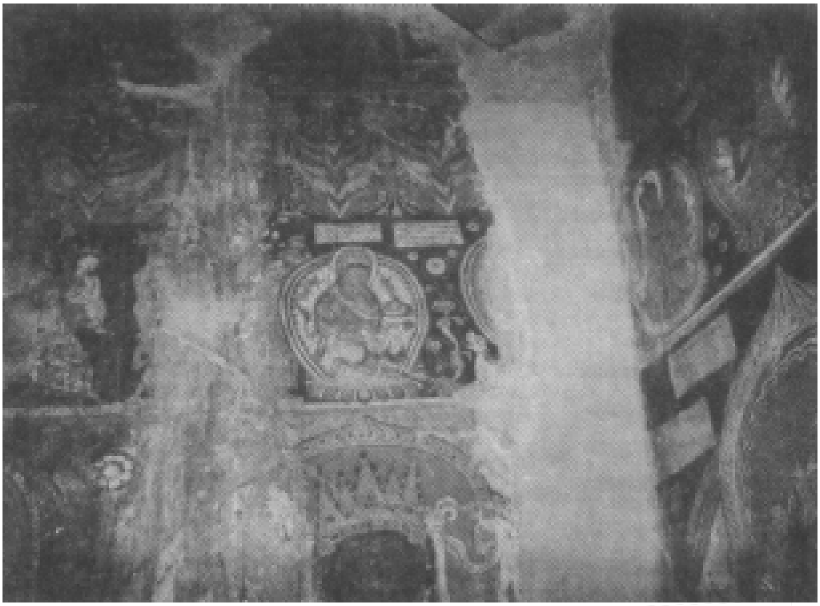
Sr. No.	Sanskrit	Tibetan
EAST		
1.	Śūraṅgama	dPa' bar 'gro ba
2.	Samantabhadra	Kun tu bzaṅ po
3.	Candraprabha	Zla ba 'od gzhon nu
4.	Bhadrapāla	bZaṅ skyoṅ
SOUTH		
5.	Jālinīprabha	Dra ba can gyi 'od
6.	Gagangañja	Nam mkha' mdzod
7.	Vajragarbha	rDo rje sñiṅ po
8.	Amṛtprabha	'Od dpag med
WEST		
9.	Sarvaśokatamonirghātanamati	Mya ṅan kun 'joms
10.	Jñānaketu	Ye śes tog
11.	Akṣayamati	Blo gros mi bzad pa
12.	Pratibhānakūṭa	sPobs pa brtsegs po
NORTH		
13.	Maitreya	Byams pa
14.	Sarvāpāyañjaha	Ṅan soṅ kun 'dren
15.	Gandhahasti	sPos kyi glaṅ po
16.	Amoghadarśin	Don yod grub pa

Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas

Sixteen Mahābodhisattvas are arranged in an identical order in the lower register of the south and north walls. On the top left is written *ye dharma hetu prabhavā*, whereas on the right side appears the name of the Mahābodhisattva. Each figure is arranged in the following order with the transcriptions of the names, as given below.

South wall (from right to left):

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Tshoṅ dpoṅ. || ||
2. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Thogs pa myed pa. || ||
3. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Blo gros mtha' yas. || ||



Pl. XLVI Buddhas and a Bodhisattva on the south and east walls of the circumambulation

4. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Kun tu myed pa. || ||
5. Byan chub sems dpa'chen po rGya-mtsho'i dblo gros. || ||
6. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Dri ma myed pa. || ||
7. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po Kun tu snaṅ ba. || ||
8. Inscription illegible but *ye-dharma* written in Śāradā script above the lotus-*āsana*.

North wall (from left to right):

1. Completely erased.
2. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po Śes [xxx.] || ||
3. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po gLaṅ po śugs ldan.||
4. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po Las byin. || ||
5. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po sTobs po che. || ||
6. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po [xxx] la. ||
7. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po Ye śes 'od gzer .|.
8. No inscription traceable

Seven names, written on the south wall, have the prefix *mahābodhisattva*; on the north wall is written simply *byaṅ-chub sems-dpa'sems-dpa'chen-po*, i.e. *bodhisattva mahāsattva*. All figures have been painted

slightly before the completion of murals surrounding the renovation inscription.[24]

Eight Buddhas

The western wall of the circumambulation at present accommodates six Buddhas—three each in the middle and lower registers—along with their pupils referred to as *slob-ma rdzu-'phrul* (miraculous students). Two Buddhas, one each in the middle and the lower register have perished and the space on the wall has been painted afresh showing three dGe-lugs-pa authorities.[25] The scheme given below shows that originally there were eight Buddhas on the wall. Inscriptions identify some of the figures depicted on the wall in the order indicated by the arrangement of numbers below.

Lion-faced kīrttimukhas								upper register
Twenty-four Buddhas of Bhadrakalpa								
	9		6		3			
11		8		5		2	1	middle register
	10		7		4			
	9		6		3			lower register
11		8		5		2	1	
	10		7		4			
Flower decoration of AD 996								dado

Inscriptions in lower register:

1. Illegible.
2. de bzhin gśegs pa dgra bcom pa yaṅ dag par rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas rgyal ba Byams pa. || ||
3. slob ma śes rab can gyi mchog 'phags pa Śa ri'i bu. || ||
4. Blank space.
5. As in no. 2 above but Buddha's name is Śag kya thub pa. || ||
6. slob ma rdzu 'phrul gyi mchog 'phags pa Mye'u 'gal gyi bu. || ||
7. slob ma rdzu 'phrul can gyi mchog 'phags pa rKaṅ gñis spyod || ||
8. As in nos 2 and 5 above, but the Buddha's name remains illegible.

9–12. Old murals totally destroyed, however, new murals represent three dGe-lugs-pa teachers.

Inscriptions in middle register:

1. Destroyed.
2. Destroyed.
3. slob ma śes rab can gyi mchog 'phags pa Bla ma. || ||
4. slob ma śes rab can gyi mchog 'phags pa yaṅ dag 'Tsha'. || ||
5. Not traceable.
6. slob ma śes [rab] can gyi mchog 'phags pa Gro zhin skyes. || ||
7. slob ma rdzu 'phrul gyi mchog 'phags pa 'Byuṅ ba. || || ||
8. No name traceable.

9-12. Three dGe-lugs-pa figures painted over the original murals.

The names of Byams-pa (Maitreya) and Śākyamuni are clearly legible on the lower register. It seems very likely that the two other Buddhas represented were 'Od-sruṅs (no. 8) and gSer thub (no. 11 but now totally defaced). No name of the Buddhas in the middle register is legible. I think they represent from right to left: 'Khor-ba-'jigs, Thams-cad-skyob, gTsug-tor and rNam-gzigs. The palaeography and orthographic characteristics of the Tibetan inscriptions remarkably remain the same as noticed earlier in the case of the Bodhisattvas and Mahābodhisattvas.

Characteristics of Style III

Most of the murals in Style III are based on the Buddhist texts. No historical mural or panel is noticed. In every case the oval-shaped nimbus of the Bodhisattvas goes beyond the aura and terminates in a pointed shape. The auras of the Thousand Buddhas are round (as also noticed in Styles I and II). The *ūrṇā* and *uṣṇīṣa* of the Thousand Buddhas are depicted prominently. The rosettes which intervened frequently between figures and structures in Style II continue but now these are also flower-laden plants, buds and twisting vines.

From the elegantly patterned robes and *dhotīs* and elaborate jewellery worn by the Bodhisattvas one can infer that the 'medieval' trend, so popular in northern India, had reached Tabo via Kashmir, Chamba, Kangra and Kulu where sculptures in metal, wood and stone show the preponderance of medieval characteristics. Crowns studded with precious jewels, the ear ornaments worn on the upper part of the ears, the stylized armlets and bracelets undeniably suggest that no other mural style in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ was executed with such meticulous care. The credit goes to the artists who were able to integrate external forms with their internal meanings. It was perhaps through the practice of meditation and physical discipline that the artists were able to achieve

spiritual ecstasy which they were able to transmit in their plastic and visual arts. Many Bodhisattvas are shown sitting above their exalted lotus-seats, floating between sky and earth—a rare feature in the murals of Tabo, especially of style III.

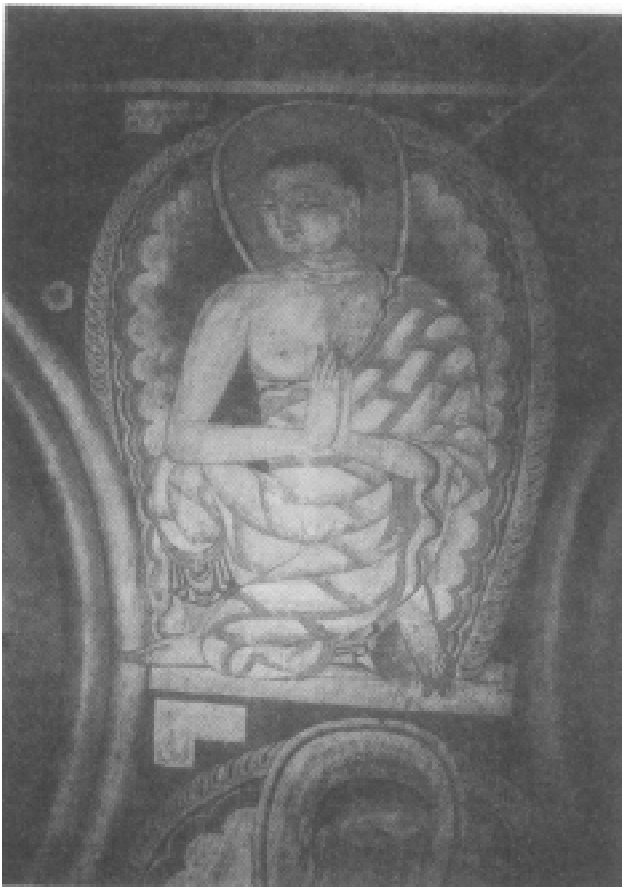
The flowing scarfs, earlier seen in the murals of Style II, are now highly stylized. The rainbow *prabhāmaṇḍala* round the figures of the Buddhas on the western wall repeats a style introduced in the 'Du-khaṅ in AD 996. No assembly or congregation of monks or common people has been noticed. A few murals in the topmost section of the eastern wall of the circumambulation are based on the first page of the *Ārya-bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra*. The curly hair of the three-headed Brahmā, shown seated on two swans, is reminiscent of the late Gandharan style. Indra seated on his Airāvat is one of the finest murals preserved in the *skor-lam* (Pl. XLVII). The depiction of the Bodhisattvas has been copied from the clay sculptures but certain differences are clearly noticeable. The triple-crescent and the suspended three strings of beads have been omitted in the *skor-lam*. The design on the monastic robe of Śari-bu (Pl. XLVIII) remains the same as noticed on the robe worn by Gu-na-ba-na-ti-'or of Chos-sga. The artists in the *skor-lam* worked within specific rules and painted the murals according to the Buddhist texts. Their creativity, at its best, can be seen in the armlets and the buckles of the *mekhalās* of the Bodhisattvas which were turned into lively lion-faced *bhadramukhas*. The double trimming bands and the plan of the *nāgara* temples were some of the designs introduced into the *skor-lam*. The entire group seems to have been supervised in AD 1040–2 by Yasā and Rāmu, the master *citrakāras* of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

Murals of Style IV: 'Du-khaṅ and Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ

The murals related to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of ten directions painted on the upper register of the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala belong to Style IV. Wi-ñu-myin, an assembly of the Buddha and Rigs gsum dgon-po (three protective Bodhisattvas) in the upper register of the *maṇḍapa*'s eastern wall can safely be assigned to the style discussed below (Pl. XLIX). Inscriptions specifying the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of ten directions were written soon after completing the names of the Bodhisattvas of the Bhadrakalpa in the *skor-lam*. *Tsheg* before single or double *śad* has been used frequently. A few examples of the reversed *i* also appear in the *ye dharma hetu prabhavā* dictum but with decreasing frequency.



Pl, XLVII Indra and Hayagrīva in the circumambulation, top row



Pl. XLVIII The kneeling Śa-ri-bu, the western wall of the circumambulation

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Ten Directions

The Buddhas of ten directions along with the Bodhisattvas are painted on the south and the north walls of the 'Du-khaṅ above the clay sculptures. Two friezes (98 cm in height) run along east-west and west-east directions on the south and north walls. Originally, each figure had been precisely identified by Tibetan inscriptions, written on the top corners; unfortunately, many of them have perished beyond recovery. Inscriptions identify each mural in the following order given below (see Appendix I):



Pl. XLIX Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī on the *maṇḍapa*'s eastern wall, top row

SOUTH WALL

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' 'Od gzẹr kun gzer kun nas 'byuṅ ba. ||
2. Śar phyogs kyí de bzhin gśegs pa dKon mchog 'byuṅ gna's (gnas). || (Pl. L)
3. [...].
4. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' Lag na pad mo. ||
5. Śar lo [mtshams kyi] de bzhin gśegs pa [Pad mo dam pa'i] dpal. (Pl. LI)
6. [...].
7. Byaṅ chub sems pa [Mya ṅan] myed pa. |
8. Lho phyogs kyi de bzhin gśegs pa Mya ṅan med pa'i dpal. ||
9. [...].
10. [...].[26]
11. Lho [nub] kyí phyogs mtshams kyi de bzhin gśegs pa Ñ̃í ma'í dkyil 'khor snaṅ ba [dam pa'í] dpal. ||
12. [...].
13. [...].
14. ['Og gi] phyogs kyi de bzhin gśegs pa Pad mo dam dpal. ||
15. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po Pad mo dam pa'i. ||



Pl. L The Tathāgata dKon-mchog 'byuṅ-gnas along with the Bodhisattva of the eastern direction, south wall, 'Du-khaṅ



Pl. LI Pad-mo dam-pa'i-dpal, the Buddha of the south-east direction

NORTH WALL

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' 'phags pa sPyan ras gzigs dbaṅ phyug. || (Pl. LII)
2. Nub phyogs kyi de bzhin gśegs pa Rin cen 'od 'phro. ||
3. [Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sPyod pa'i blo gros. ||]
4. [...].
5. [Nub byaṅ gi mtshams kyi de bzhin gśegs pa gDugs dam pa'i dpal . ||]
6. [...].
7. [...] sems pa chen po [...].
8. Byaṅ phyogs kyi logs kyi de bzhin gśegs pa rGyal ba'i dbaṅ po. ||
9. [...].
10. [...].
11. Byaṅ śar gyi phyogs mtshams kyi de bzhin gśegs pa [Teṅ ṅe 'dzin] gyi glaṅ po dam pa'i dpal. ||
12. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' chen po rNam par rgyal bas rnam par gnond pa. ||



Pl. LII The Tathāgata Rin-cen 'od-'phro and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and sPyod-pa'i blo-gros on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ

13. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' [...] , Jam [...]. ||
14. sTeṅ gi phyogs kyi de bzhin gśegs pa dGa' ba'i dpal. || ||
15. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' dGa' bas byin la. ||

The names of the six Bodhisattvas (nos 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13) on the south wall and the seven on the south wall (nos 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13) are illegible. However, the names of the five Tathāgatas on the south wall are clearly legible. The name of one Tathāgata (no. 5) is illegible on the south wall. Since his direction is well-known he can be identified as gDugs dam-pa'i dpal reigning in the north-west. Fortunately, we have been able to identify the source used for this visual scheme. The entire Sūtra, in the collection of the *bKa'-'gyur*, entitled *dPaṅ-skoṅ phyag-brgya-pa mdo*,[27] enumerates the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. There are many Buddhist Sūtras and Tantras which specify these names but the list given is from the source cited above and was used by the artists of Tabo to fascinating effect as this comparative Table 7 demonstrates.

The comparative study of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas given above amply demonstrates that the artists decorating the upper register of the 'Du-khaṅ used the Tibetan text of the *dPaṅ-skoṅ phyag-brgya-pa mdo* for visual imagery. There are some minor spelling variations, e.g. the writer of the inscription at Tabo preferred *dkon-mchog* instead of *rin-chen* for the first Buddha; however, both words stand for the gem (*ratna*). Out of the ten Bodhisattvas of group I, the names of only six are legible at Tabo. Therefore, four names, which are totally erased, can easily be restored with the help of those listed in the Sūtra.

The names of the ten Bodhisattvas of group II appear in the following order in the *dPaṅ-skoṅ phyag-brgya-pa mdo*:[28]

1. sPyan-ras-gzigs kyi dbaṅ-phyug
2. Byams pa
3. Nam-mkha'i sñiṅ-po
4. Kun-tu bzaṅ -po
5. Phyag-na rdo-rje
6. 'Jam-dpal
7. sGrib-pa thams-cad rnam-par sel-ba
8. Sai-sñiṅ-po
9. Dri-ma med-par grags-pa
10. mThu-chen-thob

The Bodhisattva sPyan-ras-gzigs dbaṅ-phyug is the first figure depicted on the north wall (Pl. LII) and number 13 seems to represent

TABLE 7
Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of Ten Directions: A comparative study

Sr. No.	Buddhas in PK	Buddhas at Tabo	Bodhisattvas in PK	Bodhisattvas at Tabo	Directions
1.	Rin-chen 'byuṅ-gnas	dKon-mchog 'byuṅ gna's	'Od-zer kun-nas 'byuṅ-ba	'Od-gzer kun-gzer kun-nas 'byuṅ-ba	east
2.	Mya-ṅan-med pa'i dpal	Mya-ṅan-myed pa'i dpal	Mya-ṅan-med-pas	[Mya-ṅan] myed-pa	south
3.	Rin-chen 'od-'phro	Rin-cen 'od-'phro	sPyod-pa'i blo-gros	[. . .]	west
4.	rGyal-ba'i dbaṅ-po	rGyal-ba'i dbaṅ-po	rGyal-bas	[. . .]	north
5.	Teṅ-ṅe-'dzin gyi glaṅ-po dam-pa'i-dpal	[Teṅ-ṅe-'dzin] gyi glaṅ-po dam pa'i dpal	rNam-par rgyal-bas rnam-par gnon-pa	rNam-par rgyal-bas rnam-par gnond-pa	north-cast
6.	Pad-mo dam-pa'i-dpal	[Pad-mo dam-pa'i]-dpal	Lag-na pad-mc	Lag-na pad-mo	south-east
7.	Ñi-ma'i dkyil-khor snaṅ-ba dam-pa'i-dpal	Ñi-ma'i dkyil-'khor snaṅ-ba dam-pa'i-dpal	Ñi-ma rab-tu snaṅ-ba	[. . .]	south-west
8.	gDugs dam-pa'i-dpal	[. . .]	Rin-chen-mchog	[. . .]	north-west
9.	Pad-mo'i-dpal	Pad-mo dam-pa'i	Pad-mo dam-pa	Pad-mo dam-pa'i	below (nadir)
10.	dGa-pa'i-dpal	dGa' ba'i-dpal	dGa'-bas byin-la	dGa'-bas byin-la	above[a] (zenith)

[a]*bla-ma* in PK and *steṅ-gyi* in Tabo inscription.

'Jam-dpal. This scheme convinced me that the totally illegible names can be restored from the list of the ten Bodhisattvas of the group II listed above. Each Buddha is flanked by a Bodhisattva on both sides, one name is from group I, where a particular direction of the Bodhisattva is given; the other seems to be taken from group II listed in the same text. This is the rarest surviving proof of mural traditions of Tabo of the early AD 1040s.

Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala

No square or round *maṇḍala* has been visualized by the artists of Tabo in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ but a rectangular *maṇḍala* without proper gates has been painted on the western wall of the 'Du-khaṅ just above the two clay goddesses, Vajrālokā and Vajragītā (Pl. LIII). It also extends to the middle of the wall constructed over the entrance leading into the *garbhagṛha*. With the exception of four partially destroyed murals of four Uṣṇīṣa deities the entire *maṇḍala* is in very good condition.

14	10	6	2		4	8	12	16
				①				
15	11	7	3		5	9	13	17

Mañjughoṣa

Listed below are the names of the deities as they correspond to the numbers arranged above.

I. 1. Four-faced Mañjughoṣa seated on a lotus seat in *vjra-paryaṅka-mudrā*

II. Four Uṣṇīṣa deities of directions:
2. Mahoṣaṇīṣa
3. Sitātapatra
4. Tejorāśī
5. Vijayośṇīṣa

III Four Uṣṇīṣa deities of corners:
6. Vikirṇa
7. Udgata
8. Mahodgata
9. Ojas

IV. Four Buddhas and their vehicles:
10. Akṣobhya on elephants



Pl. LIII Mañjughoṣa in the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala on the top row of the *maṇḍapa*'s west wall

11. Ratnasambhava on horses
12. Amitābha on peacocks
13. Amoghasiddhi on eagles

V. Four Śaktis:

14. Locanā
15. Māmakī
16. Paṇḍarā
17. Tārā

The iconographic characteristics of Mañjughoṣa and his entourage becomes much clearer from Table 8.

From the arrangement of deities around Mañjughoṣa it becomes clear that it represents the inner circle of the Dharmadhāta Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala. A comparative study of all seventeen deities listed above with those given in the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* makes an absorbing analysis. On the iconography of Mañjughoṣa, the text elaborates thus:

> Mañjughoṣa vajraparyaṅkī . . . suvarṇavarṇaḥ . . . vajra-ratna-padma-viśvavajra-mālā mukuṭopari pañcabuddha-ratna-kiriṭī vicitra-ratnābharaṇām baraḥ śṛṅgāra-ras-rāśiḥ pīta-nīla-rakta-sita-mūla-savya-paścima vāmamukho aṣṭabhujo dvābhyaṁ dharmacakramudraḥ savyaiḥ kṛpāṇa-bāṇa-vajrāṇi vāmaih prajñā-pāramitā pustaka cāpa vajraghaṇṭa bibhrāṇaḥ ||[29]

With the exception of the lion's throne the iconographic details given in the passage quoted above correspond exactly with the iconography of Mañjughoṣa depicted at Tabo. Similarly, the colours, attributes, seating postures of eight Uṣṇīṣa deities are also the same as prescribed in the text. Each Uṣṇīṣa deity holds a *cakra* in the right hand and the left touches the seat. The iconography of the four Buddhas—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi—is almost the same as that expounded in the text. There, however, occurs a minor variation in the colour scheme of the right and left faces of Akṣobhya. The mural at Tabo shows Akṣobhya's right and left faces as blue and white, respectively, whereas the text recommends white (*śubhraṁ*) and red (*rakta*) respectively.

The question which needs to be addressed is whether the *Niṣpanna-yogāvalī* was written by Abhayākaragupta much later than the suggested date for the mural of the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala painted at Tabo. There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the date of Abhayākaragupta,[30] but he is considered a contemporary of the Pāla king Rāmapāla (AD 1077–1119/1084–1126). The *Niṣpannayogāvalī* along

TABLE 8

Iconographic details of Mañjughoṣa and four Buddhas from the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala, Tabo

Sr. No.	Name	Attributes		Colour of the deity	Colour of main face	Colour of right face	Colour of west face	Colour of left face
1.	Mañjughoṣa	r.h.	l.h.					
		a. sword	book	golden	yellow	blue	red	reddish-white
		b. arrow	bow					
		c. vajra	bell					
		two hands in *dharma-cakra-mudrā*						
2.	Akṣobhya	a. sword	*	blue	blue	blue[a]	yellow	white[b]
		b. vajra	bell					
		c. arrow	fetter					
		d. hook	bow					
3.	Ratnasambhava	a. vajra	cintāmaṇi	yellow	yellow	blue	red	white
		b. sword	vajrabell					
		c. arrow	fetter					
		d. hook	bow					

4.	Amitābha	a. vajra	bow					
		b. arrow	lotus	red	red	blue	white	yellow
		c. sword	fetter					
		d. hook	bell					
5.	Amoghasiddhi	a. sword	*					
		b. vajra	bell	green	green	yellow	red	white
		c. arrow	bow					
		d. hook	fetter					

*Pointed forefinger.
[a]White in NP.
[b]Red in NP.

with the *Vajrāvalī* and the *Jyotirmañjarī* form one unit and are known as the 'three cycles' (*skor-gsum*) in Tibetan tradition. All these works were composed by Abhayākaragupta between AD 1101 and 1108. Was it possible, therefore, that the artists of Tabo used a material which was later compiled by Abhayākaragupta for his *Niṣpannayogāvalī*? We do not think that the artist had an access to the entire text of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* as we have today. Several independent *maṇḍalas* which were painted by the artists might have contributed to the making of the text in the beginning of the twelfth century. With the compilation of the full text of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* its execution on the walls of the temple became possible as the artists working at Nako (in Kinnaur) executed the full *maṇḍala* of the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala on the wall of the Lo-tsā-ba lha-khaṅ with meticulous precision.[31]

Rigs gsum dgon-po

Three Bodhisattvas along with three other murals are painted over the 'Du-khaṅ's door. Each one of them is identified by an inscription. From left to right the inscriptions read as:

1. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po thugs rje li mṅa' bdag sPyan ras gzigs kyi dbaṅ phyug. ||
2. Byaṅ chub [...] chen po rnam par 'Jam [...].
3. Byaṅ chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po g[...] Phyag na rdo rje. ||

Below each inscription is repeated the *ye dharma hetu prabhavā* dictum in the same orthography as noticed in the inscriptions accompanying the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of ten directions. What is absolutely clear from the inscriptions transcribed above is that Avalokiteśvara's and Vajrapāṇi's names are legible but only 'Jam has survived from the third name. This is 'Jam-dpal (Mañjuśrī) because the figure above clearly holds a book in his left hand. All the Bodhisattvas are shown in the *lalitāsana* on the lotus seats. The three Bodhisattvas represent the three families of the gods, men and serpents, respectively (Pl. XLIX).

An Assembly of the Buddha

The Buddha, seated in the *vajraparyaṅkāsana*, is shown above the mural of the protectress of Tabo. On either side of him appear possibly Bodhisattvas. The figure on the proper right of the central deity is shown in the *latitāsana* with the right leg hanging down. His right hand holds

an *akṣamālā* in the same style as that of Avalokiteśvara on the same wall. Both Bodhisattvas are sitting on the raised *pīṭhas* (pedestals). Such pedestals are normally shown beneath the metal and wooden sculptures in Kashmir and Chamba. The figure on the left of the Buddha is in light blue colour. His right hand holds either a branch or multi-flowering plant. The iconographical details reveal that the panel probably represents Amitābha (red) and his two acolytes Avalokiteśvara (white) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (blue). This seems to be a copy of an iconographic scene shown in the sanctum.

Chracteristics of Style IV

The number of colours used in the circular *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the main deities has been reduced. A definite change is perceptible as the pupils are slightly towards the central part of the eyes rather than towards the nose as in Style III. The *mudrās* of numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas form an interesting study. Of particular interest are the pointed forefingers (*tarjanī*) of Akṣobhya and Amoghasiddhi in the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇ ḍala. Apart from showing the *vajraparyaṅka-mudrā* so frequently the artists have beautifully depicted the *latitāsana* (the attitude of relaxation) for the protectors of the three worlds, and another variant of the same *āsana* for two Bodhisattvas in the adjoining scene. Interestingly, all attributes are shown symbolically as has been the case with the clay sculptures. The *citrakāra*s have skilfully used their brushes and pens to depict the minutest details of the *aṅkuśa* and the mouths of lions in the Dharmadhātu Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala.

No major change is seen in the style of the oval-shaped nimbus but an extra black brush has been used for the outermost lines and the flames. The artists have reverted back to a single or triple or five-pointed simple crowns unlike those worn by the Bodhisattvas in the circumambulation. *Pañcabuddharatna kirīṭa* worn by Mañjughoṣa has been painted with utmost precision. The style of the *mekhalā* of Mañjughoṣa has changed completely from the earlier types; so have the designs of the *kaṅgana, kuṇḍala* and the *viśvavajramālā*. The peculiar absence of the *bhadramukhas* in the 'Du-khaṅ is startling; instead a series of birds (*haṁsas*) are shown at the intersection of the walls. Thereafter are painted a series of three-stringed tassels, frequently interspersed by multi-coloured cloth hangings looking very like Windsor neckties. The artists working in the 'Du-khaṅ were able to show, so pleasingly, the numerous moods and facial expressions in the Dharmadhātu

Vāgīśvaramaṇḍala by portraying the *raudraṁ, śāntaṁ, vīraṁ* and *śubhraṁ* aspects referred to in canonical texts.

HISTORICAL AND NARRATIVE MURALS IN THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ: STYLE V

The study of the numerous mural styles in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ reveals that the renovation inscription on the western wall of the sanctum was ordered to be inscribed by Byaṅ-chub-'od in AD 1042 soon after the completion of the decorations in the 'Du-khaṅ and the 'Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. Apart from the historical murals painted immediately above the renovation inscription (42.5 cm by 1.08 m) there is no conclusive proof to show which other murals were completed in AD 1042. Although, judging by stylistic considerations it would appear that the three smaller panels on each side of Byaṅ-chub-'od, a few figures of historical persons on the right wall of the sanctum (now totally defaced), a number of persons associated in numerous capacities with the renovations in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, depicted on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ below the clay statue of Vajrāveśa, and the protectress of Tabo, Wi-ñu-myin, over the entrance were completed around this time.

What is common between the several depictions of 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub of sÑel-'or is that his hats and robes are remarkably identical. Particularly his black shoes, the monastic robe with the light blue collars spread on the shoulders and a light red hat seem to have been finished by the same master who did the portrait of Byaṅ-chub-'od. The royal umbrella over Byaṅ-chub-'od's head is quite distinct from the umbrellas shown in Style II (Pl. LIV). The curtain fixed onto the wall with the round wooden pegs is almost identical to the curtain depicted behind Wi-ñu-myin in the *maṇḍapa* (Pl. LV). Wi-ñu-myin's curtain has a series of rosettes, seen also on the cloth paintings in the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa*.[32] Two flower-type wheels (signifying royalty and patronage to Buddhism) below Byaṅ-chub-'od are also repeated on the ceiling. An unidentified mural of some important princes of Gu-ge has been painted on the inner northern wall of the sanctum. While comparing its iconographic details with that of Byaṅ-chub-'od it becomes clear that this is a mural of some other prince. The figure is slightly turned to the right and he holds a three-budded branch of a flower. This may be the symbolical representation of the *dkon-mchog-gsum* (*triratna*), i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. No other prince of Gu-ge was so actively involved in the diffusion of Buddhism in his empire as was Ye-śes-'od. Could



Pl. LIV The Renovation inscription and numerous other murals depicted on the outer wall of the sanctum



Pl. LV Wi-ñu-myin and her female attendants, top row of the *maṇḍapa*, gTsug-lag-khaṅ

this protrait represent him? His deeds are prominently recalled in the very first line of the renovation inscription. He wears a distinct turban, a type not noticed in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Several male and female figures gathered around him wear Tibetan costumes so regularly depicted in the major assembly scenes in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Hats worn by six male figures on the left of the central figure are of three varieties. Round hats of two persons in the lowermost row are similar to that of the gZhi'-mal-la of Rum in Gu-ge. The dresses of the females figures are also identical to those worn by the females shown around Wi-ñu-myin.

Six *sthānaka* females in the *garbhagṛha*—two figures shown on either side of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, to my estimate, do not belong to AD 996–1000 as opined by some scholars.



Pl. LVI Female attendant with a royal umbrella

Elongated figures decked with a variety ornaments are full of vigour and vitality. The fluttering scarfs spread over the shoulders remind us of scarfs woven today in Kulu. The patterned *sāṛīs* offer rich material for further research. The manner in which the stately umbrella is held by one of them in her right hand (Pl. LVI) is startling because it is made of woolen cloth with designs now commonly seen in Kulu. The arrangement of the hair in a bun reminds us of similar arrangements seen in some sculptures of Kulu and Chamba.[33] Some of the flying deities painted on either side of Amitābha clearly resemble those depicted on the cloth paintings discussed in Style VI.

WESTERN-HIMALAYAN TEXTILES: PAINTED CEILINGS OF THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ

The richness of Tabo's mural traditions becomes clear from the surviving fragments of cloth paintings pasted on the ceiling of the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (sanctum) and the 'Du-khaṅ (*maṇḍapa*). I could not trace any fragment on the ceiling of the sGo-khaṅ which hints that no cloth painting was executed in AD 996 when the gTsug-lag-khaṅ was originally established by Ye-śes-'od. The designs and themes on the cloth paintings do indicate that many of them can be compared with those executed on the murals, completed during AD 1040–2.

The cloth paintings of Tabo's gTsug-lag-khaṅ are not so intricate and do not offer a variety of patterns like those seen on the ceilings of Alchi's Sumtsek (gSum-brtsegs).[34] At Alchi the paintings are done on wooden boards but at Tabo, first the paintings were completed on cloth and thereafter fixed onto wooden blocks. Considering the age of these cloth paintings they need to be preserved from one major danger. The roofs of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ need to be water-proof.

On-the-spot survey reveals that a thick woven cotton cloth served as a base for these paintings. An analysis of a few fragments of cloth shows that it had been dipped into some glue and was allowed to dry and harden so that primary colours could be applied. The reverse side of the cloth is blank. In the *skor-lam*, each oblong panel is decorated with a deity of offering within a pearled roundel (Pl. LVII). Also full-blossomed flowers are shown on either side of the deity. In the next panel the above scheme is reversed (Pl. LVIII). Two bowls full of pearls normally fill up the space at the corners.

Either the frontal view or the profile of the deity is shown on the ceiling of the sanctum. In the former, the deity holds a bowl of jewels



Pl. LIX Illuminated folio of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Tabo, dated AD 1040–2

or flowers in his/her hands; in the latter, he/she holds a conch,, trumpet, flag or flowers, and sometimes is shown offering flowers to the central flower (*padma*). Such deities of offering are generally seen on the facade of the Lakṣaṇā Devī temple, Bharmaur and also on the stone portals of several ruined temples at Masrur in Kangra.[35] The artists have tried to depict the fluttering ends of the scarfs within an arched *prabhāmaṇḍala*; sometimes, however, they were forced to use any blank space available between the pearled roundel and the rainbow-type arches. What is quite common among the dress of the deities is the tight fitting *dhotīs* with brocade borders with embroidered designs at regular intervals. The pearled roundels also appear in the 'Du-khaṅ. That some of the decorations were completed by novices is apparent from unplanned designs.[36] One of the panels clearly suggests that these cloth paintings were done soon after the completion of the murals on the western wall of the sanctum discussed above in Style V.

The majority of the female divinities depicted on the ceiling are in *añjalīmudrā* and are closely related to the female figures painted on the inner walls of the sanctum, two each on the south, west and the north. Also, I would like to place a nine-headed deity shown below Vajrasphoṭa

in the circumambulation to Style VI. The white pearled roundel is not noticed in any of the styles discussed above but at Alchi it has been used by the artists with meticulous perfection.[37] This decorative device has also been used on the cushion of the brass Buddha discovered from Fatehpur in Kangra.[38] It became very popular among the artists during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Several fountain stones discovered from Siya,[39] Luj[40] and Bharara[41] in Churah and Pangi areas of Chamba show its continued use for enshrining the panels of gods and goddesses. The designs and styles on the cloth paintings at Tabo show the amalgamation of styles from Kashmir, Trigarta, Kulūta and the Near Eastern traditions.

NOTES

1. There are several murals of recent times on the walls of the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. Two such panels are identified by Tibetan inscriptions—Mar-me mdzad (Dīpaṅkara) on the south wall of the 'Du-khaṅ and 'Brom-ston on the north wall.
2. Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Forest Range Officer, Tabo, informed us that Bārahsingā is not seen in the Spiti range.
3. For a complete translation of this inscription, *see* ch. VII.
4. This type of flower decoration seems to have been favoured by most of the painters working in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Remnants of this survive in the lowermost section of the circumambulation's walls. However, all other decorations above the rosette were commissioned later by Byaṅ-chub-'od.
5. Such trimming bands were in use in Iran from much earlier times. *See* Phyllis Ackerman 'Textiles through the Sasanian Period', in A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman (eds), *A Survey of Persian Art: From Prehistoric Times to the Present,* vol. II, London and New York, 1964–5, pp. 682–3, fig. 235.
6. There are traces of murals on the entrance walls of the 'Du-khaṅ. They possibly represent Vajrapāṇi and Hayagrīva.
7. Bunyiu Nanjio, *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of The Buddhist Tripitaka: The Sacred Canon of the Buddhists in China and Japan,* Oxford, 1883, p. 34.
8. The damaged murals are below the clay sculptures of Vajrateja and Ratnasambhava on the south wall.
9. See *Lalitavistara*, ch. 5.2.
10. Ibid., ch. 5.4.
11. Ibid., ch. 6.3.
12. Ibid., ch. 7.3.

13. Ibid., ch. 7.5.
14. Ibid., ch. 7.7.
15. There are three persons standing on either side of Māyā, two on the right and one on the left. They seem to depict Indra, Śakra and Brahmā according to the description provided in the *Lalitavistara*, ch. 7.9. Several folios of the *Lalitavistara* are preserved in the collection of Tabo monastery.
16. *Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha*, tr., E.H. Johnston, Delhi, 1984, pt. 3, p. 7. It is very likely that all the scenes on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ have been inspired by the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. One such mural seems to be very fascinating where the Buddha is shown descending the stairs with one figure standing behind him holding aloft an umbrella over the Buddha's head. This seems to be Buddha's descent from the heavenly worlds to Saṁkāśya. Another scene below shows an enraged elephant running towards the Tathāgata and then lowering his head at the feet of the lord.
17. Incomplete texts of the *Buddhacarita* and the *Mahāpariniravāṇasūtra* have been found in the manuscript collections of Tabo monastery.
18. A three-headed deity in the scene related to Buddha's descent from the heavenly worlds is an exception.
19. Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Ananyagāmī and Samantabhadra.
20. The depiction of the murals of the Thousand Buddhas on the exterior walls of the sanctum was not the innovation of Byaṅ-chub-'od and his artists. The walls were already decorated with the Thousand Buddhas in AD 996 as one can see the earlier figures in the lowermost section of the sanctum's exterior walls just above the flower rosettes. The fragments of the Thousand Buddhas also survive in the temple of Ye-śes-'od at Tholing. *See* Michael Henss, 'Wall-paintings in Western Tibet: The Art of the Ancient Kingdom of Guge, 1000–1500', in P. Pal (ed.) *On the Path to Void: Buddhist Art of the Tibetan Realm*, Bombay, 1996, p. 204.
21. *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ch. 19, pp. 44–7; ch. 20, pp. 50–1; ch. 21, pp. 58–9, and ch. 22, pp. 66–7.
22. Tadeusz Skorupski, ed. and tr., *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies*, Delhi, 1983.
23. *rGyud-sde Kun-btus: Texts Explaining the Significance, Technique and Initiations of a Collection of One Hundred and Thirty-two Maṇḍalas of the Sa-skya-pa Tradition*, edited by 'Jam-dbyangs Blo-gter dbang-po and compiled by N. Lungtok and N. Gyaltson, Delhi, 1971.
24. The textual source used for this visual imagery remains yet to be identified.
25. The remnants of murals on the wall show that one Buddha in each row has been painted over. The traces of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the Buddha in the upper row, and the lotus-*āsana* of the lower row now convince us that there were originally eight Buddhas on the western wall.

26. Figure and inscription completely erased.
27. TT, vol. 37, no. 933, pp. 83–99.
28. Ibid., fol. 4a, ll. 1–4.
29. *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ch. 21, p. 54.
30. Gudrun Bühnemann, 'Some Remarks on the Date of Abhayākaragupta and the Chronology of His Works', *ZDMG*, vol. 142, no. 1, 1992, pp. 120–7.
31. *See* Laxman S. Thakur, 'Nako Monastery: Archaeological Notes from an Account of the Western Himalayan Expeditions', *EW*, vol. 46, nos 3–4, 1996, p. 349, fig. 15.
32. Also the artists working in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po borrowed the designs of such flower patterns to be depicted on the ceiling.
33. Mujunī Devī mask in Nirmand, and Pārvatī in the sanctum of the Gaurī-Śaṅkara temple, Chamba.
34. For an interesting analysis of Alchi's Sumtsek paintings, *see* Roger Goepper, 'Early Kashmiri Textiles? Painted Ceilings in Alchi', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 56, 1991–92, pp. 47–74. Idem, *Alchi, Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary: The Sumtsek*, London, 1996.
35. *See* for example Thakur, *Architectural Heritage of Himachal Pradesh*, pls VI, VII, X and LXXXII.
36. Especially on the ceiling of the *maṇḍapa*.
37. Goepper, 'Early Kashmiri Textiles?', figs 19–22.
38. J.Ph. Vogel, 'Inscribed Brass Statuette from Fatehpur (Kangra)', *ASI AR*, 1904–5, pp. 107–9, pl. XXXV fig. a.
39. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pl. XVII.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., pl. XXXIVb.

VI

The Vanishing Murals II: *c.* AD 1450–1974

Our knowledge of the murals belonging to the architectural phase II, representing the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba, has perforce to remain incomplete because only a few fragments have survived in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. An analysis of the ground plans of temples, the sources used for their production and a few surviving murals from the cycle of the twenty-one Tārās make it possible to suggest that the murals generally follow the pictorial tradition depicted in Alchi's 'Du-khaṅ and Lhalung's gSer-khaṅ, respectively. It is quite clear that the artists continued to identify their creations with the help of inscriptions as the panel of the twenty-one Tārās suggests. Explorations within the monastic complex indicate that there was an interregnum of about two-hundred-and fifty years before a new temple of the gSer-khaṅ was added to the complex, sometime around AD 1450; however, some of the *stūpas* seem to have been constructed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The chronological span becomes quite clear from the analysis of the mural Style VII and its comparison with the preceding ones discussed in chapter V.

MURALS OF THE GSER-KHAṄ: STYLE VII

All the walls of the gSer-khaṅ are elaborately decorated following an artistic scheme in which the main deity is surrounded by a host of other characters. The central wall shows the Buddha with Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. On the right side of the Buddha, towards the south-western corner, appears Maitreya who is shown seated on a lotus cushion in *lalitakṣepa-mudrā*. Towards the north-western corner Mañjuśrī is shown in a similar position. The pictorial scheme first depicted here has



Pl. LVII Three oblong panels of cloth paintings on the ceiling of the circumambulation, gTsag-lag-khaṅ

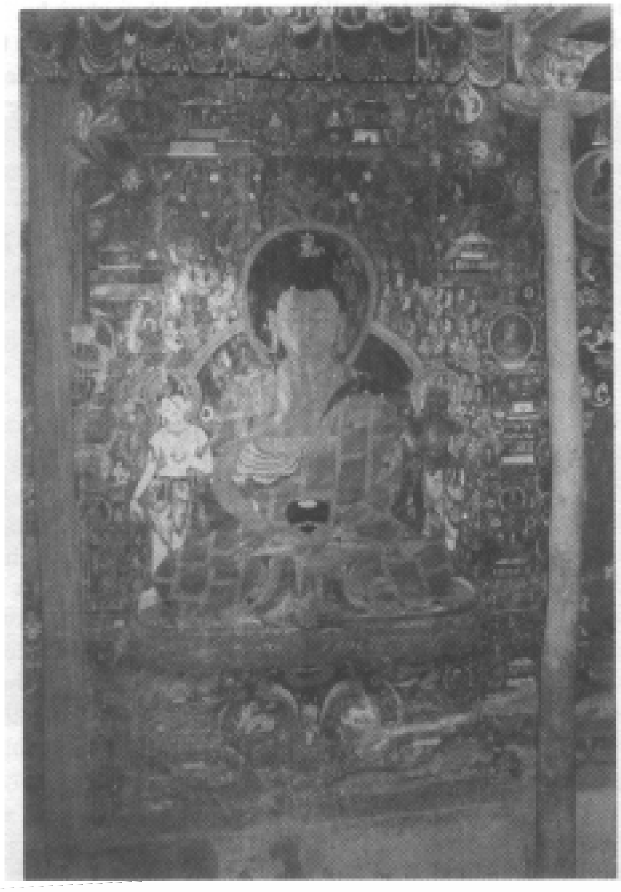


Pl. LVIII *Pūrṇapadma* with two flying deities on either side, circumambulation's ceiling

been repeated by the artists in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba, 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po, dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ and also in the cave temple. One of the characteristics of the murals of the gSer-khaṅ is the depiction of two full-blossomed flowers under the cushions of Maitreya and Mañjuśrī on which rest their hanging legs. The richness of designs on the lower garment of Maitreya is stunning. Some of the motifs are traceable to the garments worn by the deities in the *skor-lam* of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Outside the semi-arched *toraṇas* over both deities are painted four *stūpas* on either side. What is amazing is the appearance of a horned Garuḍa above the Buddha's *uṣṇīṣa,* holding in its curved beak the tails of two Nāgas beautifully inter-woven with the scrolls of the sea monster (*makara*).

Equally fascinating are the three larger murals on the south and the north walls. The medicine Buddha (Vaiḍūryaprabharāja), who appears for the first time on the south wall later became an important figurative device for visual depiction in the Spiti valley. A much more exalted (spiritually) mural on the same wall is that of Amitābha 'whose soul is endowed with incomprehensible virtues'.[1] Holding a black begging bowl in his two hands, Amitābha is in *dhyāna-mudrā* seated on a large lotus-throne. Two noble-minded (*mahāsattvaḥ*)[2] Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, are shown standing on either side. Innumerable Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Āryas, Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are depicted with meticulous precision (Pl. LX). Special attention has been given to the Buddha's monastic robe, painted very carefully; the lower garments of two accompanying Bodhisattvas are also richly decorated. The numerous people shown on either side outside the aureole and nimbus of Amitābha represent 'the assembly of the hearers of the Tathāgata'[3] as described in the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*. Multi-storeyed buildings and groves seem to represent the 'palaces and pavilions' full of 'couches strewn with beautiful cushions'[4] 'surrounded by seven times seven thousands of Apsarāses'.[5] The *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*, which lays great stress on prayer and faith in Amitābha, aptly describes the world of Sukhāvatī as endowed with 'immeasurable good qualities and excellences'.[6] A series of divine beings in numerous *mudrās* are shown sprouting forth from the flowers and the vines of intertwined creepers. The branches of the tree of wisdom are spread horizontally around the spherical nimbus. This particular scene emphatically dominates the pictorial assemblage in the gSer-khaṅ.[7]

No less interesting is Vajradhara (rDo-rje-'chaṅ) who holds a bell in his left hand and the *vajra* in his right hand.[8] Unlike the blue background



Pl. LX Amitābha in his Sukhāvatī. A pair of lions below his lotus seat is depicted in the same manner as shown in the sanctum of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ

on the north wall, the artists in this case have used saffron against the blue body of Vajradhara. A five-crescent crown with streamers tied on either side shows a mixture of old and new elements. The depiction of Vajradhara, the supreme revealer of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school, is not something surprising for he also occupies an important position in the dGe-lugs-pa order. There is, however, no direct evidence of the bKa'-brgyud-pa's influence in the gSer-khaṅ but the artists have tried to depict the eighty-four Siddhas (*grub-thob*) around the main figure of Vajra-

dhara. This is part of a syncretistic propaganda characterized by mixed visual imagery.

Three larger murals of Vairocana, Green Tārā and Uṣṇīṣavijayā are shown on the north wall. Within the round nimbus are arranged the four white faces of Vairocana (three in profile, one frontal). The delineation of the tip of the chin and two lines on the throat are peculiar to the artist who finished these murals. Four Tathāgatas associated with the Vairocana cycle are arranged outside the flamed circle of the nimbus—Akṣobhya and Amitābha on the left, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava on the right side. The only point of departure occurs in the iconography of Ratnasambhava because he is shown in *dhyāna-mudrā* instead of *varada-mudrā*. The remaining thirty-two deities of the Vairocana-*maṇḍala* are painted with meticulous accuracy. Four guardians of the gates are depicted in the lowest row. A total number of twelve goddesses appear in this *maṇḍala*—four of whom undeniably represent Sattvavajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī and Karmavajrī (Pl. LXI). The medieval trends are clearly visible in the treatment of the broad shoulders and the multi-tiered *āsana* which is supported by elephants, lions and two kneeling *bhāraputras*.[9]

The Green Tārā (sGrol-ma ljaṅ-khu) conventionally follows the same iconographic features. The style of her crown is stylistically different from the crowns of Vairocana and Uṣṇīṣavijayā. The artists have used three crescents and three inverted V-type designs, so often seen from the tenth through twelfth centuries. Her right hand is in *varada-mudrā* and in the left she holds the stalk of a blue lotus. Numerous female divinities arranged around her complete the *maṇḍala*. Most of the female figures wear a piece of garment (*kañculikā*) which covers their breasts but is left open in the front.

The three-headed Uṣṇīṣavijayā (gTsug-tor rnam-rgyal-ma) also appears on the same wall. There are three *sādhanas* pertaining to Uṣṇīṣavijayā in the *Sādhanamālā*. The *sādhana* 191 describes her iconography thus:

> ... śuklāṁ trimukhāṁ trinetrāṁ navayauvanāṁ nānālaṅkāradharāṁ aṣṭabhujāṁ bhagavatīṁ cintayet pītakṛṣṇa dakṣinetarāvadanāṁ, dakṣiṇa caturbhujaiḥ viśvavajra-padmastha-buddha-bāṇa varadamudrādharāṁ, vāmacaturbujaiḥ cāpa-tarjanī-pāśa-abhayahasta-pūrṇa-kumbhaḥ. . .[10]

Uṣṇīṣavijayā is white in complexion, three-faced, three-eyed, youthful and is bedecked with ornaments. Her right and left faces are of yellow and blue, respectively. Her three right hands carry the *viśvavajra*, the Buddha on lotus, an arrow and the fourth is in *varada-mudrā*; in her three left hands she holds



Pl. LXI Vairocana along with his entourage, north wall of the gSer-khan

a bow, a noose, the water-vessel (*pūrṇakumbha*), and the fourth is in *abhaya-mudrā*.

Uṣṇīṣavijayā depicted in the gSer-khaṅ fully conforms to the description given in the *Sādhanamālā*.

Numerous deities of the Buddhist pantheon are painted on the entrance wall. Many deities are damaged due to water seepage from the damaged roofs. On either side of the door appear Vajrapāṇi and Hayagrīva. On the left side towards the north-east corner is painted a figure, seated on a lion. His hands are in *dharmacakra-mudrā*. At the level of the shoulders appear two full-blossomed flowers on which rests a book and a sword, the favourite attributes of Mañjuśrī.[11] Above him is shown a three-headed and six-armed female deity, possibly representing one of the forms of Tārā (Jāṅgulī?). Avalokiteśvara is one of the recognizable figures on the right-hand side.

What is note worthy is the appearance of the protectress of Tabo along with her two attendants over the door. The Buddhists of Tabo introduced her form in the sGo-khaṅ and the 'Du-khaṅ (gTsug-lag-khaṅ) as discussed above in chapter V. Above this panel has been painted mGon-po phyag-drug (six-armed Mahākāla) and on his right is what seems to be Vaiśravaṇa. On the significance of the presence of the custodian of the law and of the gates, Tucci aptly remarked: 'No ritual ceremony can have the desired results, if first the evil forces, the *vighna*, have not been sent away, since these are the impediments to the formation of that sacred aura in which the compliance with the rite can only take place; the *vighna-vināśa* is consequently an indispensible introduction to the *pūjā*.'[12]

Main Characteristics of Style VII

All the decorations in the gSer-khaṅ seem to have been completed within a specific time frame as there are no traces of renovations on the walls. Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, noticed separately in Style II as Kalyāṇamitras, later became the ideal pictorial subjects at Tabo. The encirclement of many figures within sinuous vines and scrolls of the tree of knowledge on the south wall is pleasing. Multi-storeyed palaces erected on wooden pillars and struts are shown occupied by jubilant people engaged in diverse activities. Here sometimes the proportions of the anatomy are distorted. All the major deities such as Bhaiṣajyaguru, Vajradhara, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, Vairocana, Green Tārā and Uṣṇīṣavijayā are painted within a structure looking like a temple with a multi-arched *toraṇa*.

Apart from registering several new stylistic trends, perhaps copied from both Ladakh and Gu-ge, the murals in the gSer-khaṅ borrowed many decorative elements from the earlier mural traditions noticed in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. For example, sashes with several folds, two streamers tied to the crown above both ears, a triple-pointed crown and the pearled roundels are directly copied from the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. A new type of crown worn by Vajradhara, Vairocana and Uṣṇīṣavijayā originated in medieval times.

The sixteen Arhats appear for the first time at Tabo in the gSer-khaṅ. They were the disciples of the Buddha, having attained the first step of *nirvāṇa*. They are shown around Buddha on the central wall. The lion-faced *bhadramukhas* painted with meticulous perfection in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ also appear with minor modifications at the intersection of the wall and the roof. The colour of the lion's-head changes but the three-beaded tassels sprouting forth from the lion's mouth remain almost the same. The flower-patterned *dhotī* of Maitreya is so minutely decorated—it is as if the artists have carried over the tenth–eleventh century traditions unaltered from generation to generation.[13]

The themes of the murals painted on the wooden ceiling are completely different. Here the geometric and vegetal lines encircle fabulous birds of multi-coloured feathers, flowers in the roundels and Apsarāses. The white Apsarā holding *bum-pa* (*pūrṇakumbha*) in her right hand with the scarfs fluttering over her shoulders is remarkably stimulating. Such murals are also reported by Tucci from Mang-nang.[14] Summing up the features of Style VII it may be said that the painters working at Tabo had become well conversant with the stylistic idioms which previously existed in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, and copied and modified them according to the needs of the dGe-lugs-pa sect. They also introduced some new trends originating from the monastic centres of Tholing,[15] Tsaparang[16] and Gyantse where Nepali and Central-Tibetan traditions had already been assimilated into the Gu-ge repertoire (i.e. lower mṄa'-ris style). Such idioms become much more recognizable in the murals of the dKyil-khaṅ and the mGon-khaṅ.

MURALS OF THE DKYIL-KHAṄ: STYLE VIII

The dKyil-khaṅ is the second temple within the complex which is embellished with murals of both historical and devotional characters. Three *maṇḍalas* are shown on its south, west and north walls. Circular

maṇḍalas are also painted on the walls of some Buddhist monasteries located at Nako, Lhalung and Alchi in Ladakh but are conspicuous in their absence in either the gSer-khaṅ or gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

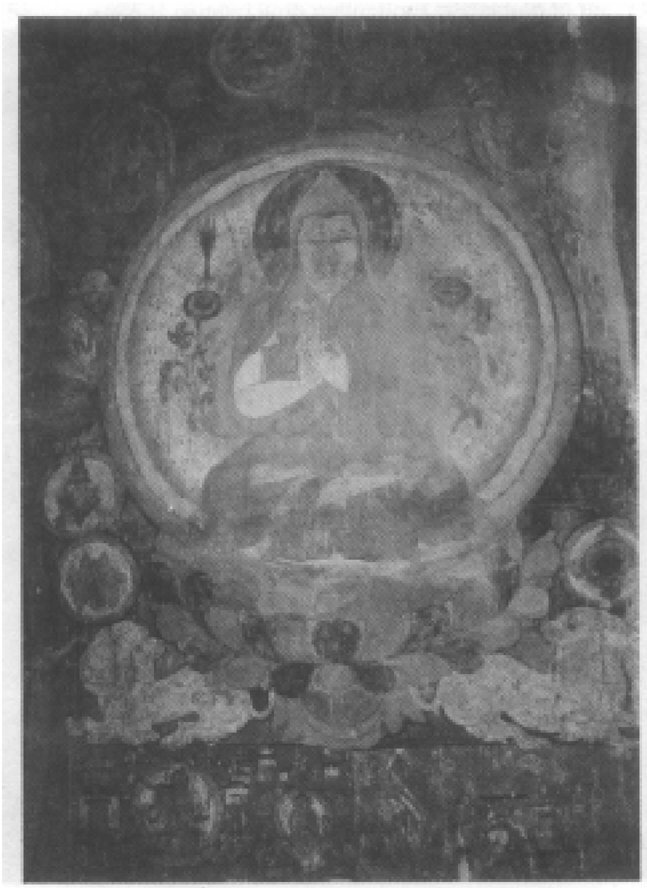
The western wall has a four-headed, two-armed, white Vairocana seated in *vajraparyaṅka-mudrā* in a circular medallion (Pl. LXII). Two lions seated back to back support his seat. Despite some difficulties in identifying an appropriate source used for the Vairocana-*maṇḍala*, the identification of Vairocana cannot be doubted. The arrangement of the deities around Vairocana makes it clear that the artists have used neither the *STTS* nor *Durgatipariśodhanatantra*. Four Tathāgatas associated with this *maṇḍala* can be identified, for they represent Amitābha seated



Pl. LXII **Vairocana, on the central wall of the dKyil-khaṅ**

on a pair of peacocks, and Amoghasiddhi on eagles. Ratnasambhava and Akṣobhya are painted on the left side. Their *prabhāmaṇḍalas* are slightly larger than the others'. What interests us here the most is the nimbus of each deity which has been brought within a round aura. The artists of the dKyil-khaṅ like their seniors, who worked earlier in the gSer-khaṅ, painted the Arhats on the central wall, but pushed them further to the south and the north vertical corners.[17]

The *maṇḍala* on the south wall has Śākyamuni, yellow in colour, in the innermost circle, with the hands in *dharmacakra-mudrā*.[18] Eight petals sprouting forth from the central circle possibly represent the eight auspicious symbols. In the third circle are shown eight deities followed



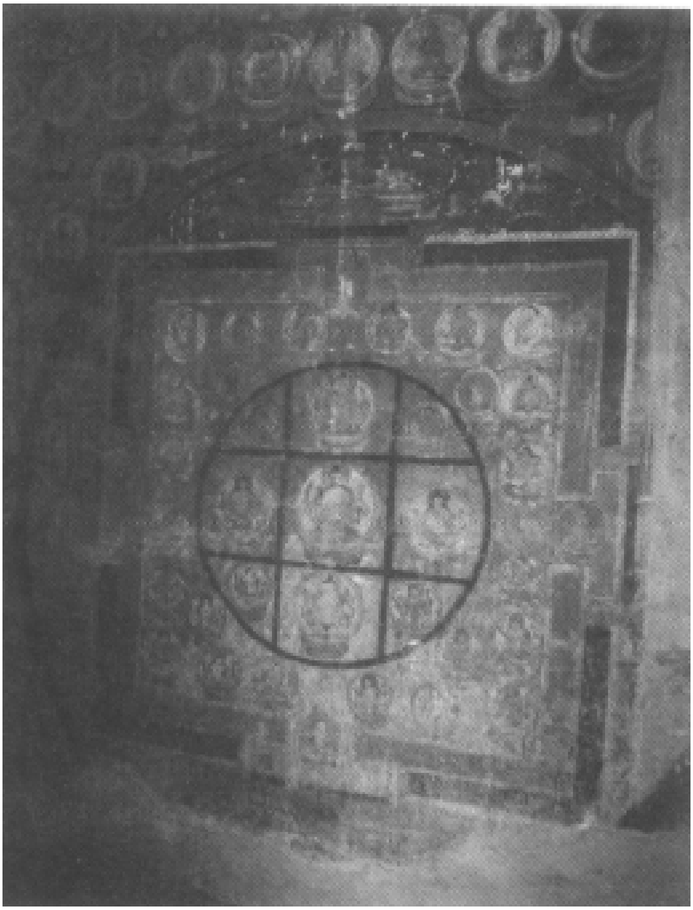
Pl. LXIII Mural of Tsoṅ-kha-pa on the south wall

by twenty-eight figures, including the four guardians in a square *maṇḍala*. Another round circle is arranged but the exact number of figures arranged within it remains undetermined.

The south-east and the south-west corners of this wall are decorated with historical and narrative murals. Three princes of Gu-ge, namely Byaṅ-chub-'od, Zhi-ba-'od and Ye-śes-'od, appear in a stately manner. The style and the manner of fixing the curtain behind them makes an interesting study in comparison with the ones fixed differently in some of the murals in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ (Style V) and the mGon-khaṅ (Style IX). The other *maṇḍalas* are depicted in the south-west corner. Many religious and historical figures are identifiable with the help of inscriptions which accompany them.[19] Among the types of buildings depicted in the panel are included the multi-storeyed palaces and the *stūpas*, typical of Tibetan craftsmanship. The over-hanging roofs of the Chinese style shown in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ are missing here. Immediately above this panel is shown Tsoṅ-kha-pa (ht. 88 cm) in a circular medallion (Pl. LXIII). A series of ribbons symbolizing luminous beams or bands of light are painted within the *prabhāmaṇḍala*.

Equally fascinating is the *maṇḍala* of Akṣobhya painted in the centre of the north wall (Pl. LXIV). One of the features of the mural is that each deity has a scarf wrapped over the shoulders which flows on either side with its ends turned upwards. A similar trend is also noticed in the gSer-khaṅ. In the north-west corner are painted numerous historical persons including Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros (ht. 89 cm), shown also in the *vajraparyaṅka* attitude with both hands in *dharmacakra-mudrā* (Pl. LXV). Below him are shown four dGe-lugs-pa adherents, all in *dharmacakra-mudrā*. We have already commented on the plans of the Tholing and Tabo complexes. Each complex has a dGe-lugs-pa scholar in the centre of the composition; unfortunately, both remain unidentified for want of inscriptions. A number of musicians playing long brass trumpets (*rag-duṅ*), especially in the scene related to Tholing, seem to indicate that they were playing in honour of the respected *lo-tsā-bas* and *paṇḍitas*. Could this be the reenactment of the memorable scene when Atīśa arrived in Tholing in AD 1042. The long instrument was invented by Byaṅ-chub-'od himself to welcome the Indian *paṇḍita*, and subsequently has been attributed to him: *rag-duṅ 'di yaṅ lha-btsun-pa'i thugs kyis śes* (the brass trumpet, also an invention of *lha btsun-pa*).[20] The two scenes depicted in Pl. LXVI are too mutilated for further analysis.

Immediately above the entrance appears Sruṅ-ma flanked by her five female attendants on either side (Pl. LXVII). On the left side appears



Pl. LXIV The *maṇḍala* of Akṣobhya, north wall, dKyil-khaṅ

two-armed Chos-rgyal.[21] There are faint traces of the guardians of the four quarters. The paintings done on the wooden planks on the ceiling are very similar to those discussed earlier in Style VII. The Apsarā holding the corners of her *oṛhnī* in both hands is depicted as if she is flying, her apparel serving as wings. A pair of stylized elephants, lions, eagles and swans are shown either facing each other or with their backs to each other. This seems to be the last temple in the complex preserving the late-tenth and eleventh century stylistic idioms. The new trends are clearly visible, but what is interesting is how the artists blended differ-



Pl. LXV Mural of Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros on the north wall

ent art styles—both the new and the old—always giving preferential treatment to the early mural styles of Tabo.

Stylistic Characteristics

The temple is both artistically and historically significant. Numerous inscriptions and murals help us in tracing the evolutionary sequence of the complex already commented upon in chapter III. Artistically, the murals are not so superb as those of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, but the painters seem to be familiar with some texts which helped them to arrange deities in the *maṇḍalas* displayed on the walls. The portrayal of the princes of Gu-ge and the temple complexes of Tholing and Tabo seems to be a



Pl. LXVI Monastic complexes of Tholing and Tabo, north wall



Pl. LXVII The protectress of Tabo, over the entrance, dKyil-khaṅ

clever move in the process of the legitimization by the dGe-lugs-pa sect over the bKa'-gdams-pa strongholds so that the bKa'-gdam-pa followers did not oppose the introduction of the teaching of the yellow sect in the Spiti valley. Rather than making a new addition to the gTsug-lag-khaṅ it was decided to add a new temple within the complex which fulfilled the spiritual needs of the yellow sect.

The artists working in the dKyil-khaṅ did not create something spectacular but seem to have borrowed many noble features from the murals of the gSer-khaṅ. The *maṇḍala* gates are now properly guarded by the respective guardians; the entrances are beautifully decorated with the hanging wooden bells so frequently noticed earlier in Style II of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The style of depicting a curtain behind the princes of Gu-ge, either fixed to a wooden rod or directly on the wall with a peg, was changed, though not abandoned. The central figure of Zhi-ba-'od is given prominence since he was considered a great translator and given the title of *pho-braṅ*.

A pair of lions, which appear regularly as the *vāhanas* of Vairocana, Tsoṅ-kha-pa and Lha-dbaṅ, are overly stylized and are shown seated on their haunches. Their manes are arranged in a manner resembling clouds, and the tails mysteriously dissolve somewhere beneath the lotus thrones.

The depiction of buildings in the murals is typical of the western-Himalayan style betraying Chinese influence. The multi-arched *toraṇas*, so fascinatingly arranged to enshrine the major divinities on the walls of the gSer-khaṅ, however, survive in a miniature panel associated with the Buddha shown seated in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā* on the diamond throne (*vajrāsana*). The decorative scarfs fluttering in the air are reminiscent of such features noticed earlier in Styles II to VII, but the number of multi-coloured ribbons within the aureole increases. While illustrating the monastic complexes of Tholing and Tabo, the artists have tried to make a picturesque surrounding with shrub-like trees, unlike those broad-leaved trees associated with the *Gaṇḍavyūha* story depicted in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. A slight change is noticed in the number of folds in the cloth suspended over the lion's face. The beaded tassels have been reduced from three to one. Of special interest is the hair style of the *blon-po* dPon-btsun of Dankhar, which looks like a hat.[22] The red rosette fills up the gaps between the decorations. The larger gaps are covered by the cluster of clouds, sometimes interspersed with rosettes. Equally fascinating are the orthographic changes in the Tibetan inscriptions, discussed in detail in the next chapter.

MURALS OF THE MGON-KHAṄ: STYLE IX

As already pointed out the mGon-khaṅ is, presently, the most sacred temple in the precinct, dedicated to the Mahāvajrabhairava, the *yi-dam* of the dGe-lugs-pa sect. As soon as the dGe-lugs-pa sect received popular support the need was felt to construct a temple exclusively dedicated to rDo-rje 'jigs-byed chen-po. Temples constructed during the architectural phases III to VIII do not enshrine any clay statue (barring the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ),. The central wall of the temple normally depicts the deity to whom the temple was dedicated. In the absence of epigraphic evidence it is extremely difficult to identify all the main deities and to establish their possible association with the *maṇḍala* of Mahāvajra- bhairava. Tucci has rightly pointed out that 'Vajrabhairava is a fusion of two aspects: the blessed aspect and the irate aspect . . . Both are emanations of the double nature of Mañjuśrī'.[23] Vajrabhairava, therefore, is known as the god of redemption and a defender of faith.

The central wall whose complete visibility is obstructed by the wooden altar, containing articles associated with the liturgy of Vajrabhairava, has two large murals of Vajrabhairava and mGon-po phyag-drug. The blue Vajrabhairava, shown with many arms and two horns, is

in a standing position. The eastern and western walls have three deities each. Those depicted on the eastern wall are riding galloping horses.[24] The four-armed blue deity in the north-eastern corner possibly represents dPal-mgon phyag bzhi-pa.[25] Apart from holding a sword and a skull-cup, he also carries a sharp-edged rod pierced through a human figure. Equally interesting is the snake-rope tied at the mouth of the horse. A five-skull diadem is quite typical among all deities emitting flames within a blue nimbus. Eight auspicious symbols have been painted below the third blue figure on the same wall.[26]

Three figures appear on the western wall—two blue and one red in colour. All these figures depict the circle of the protective deities generally called the mGon-po-'khor. The south wall has three figures, two of whom have bull's heads and wear crowns of skulls. The two-armed blue figure on the left is shown as the king of religion of the outer sphere. He holds a sceptre topped by a skull in his right hand and a naked female figure (Yamī) is shown dancing on the pointed finger of the left hand. He is shown in action, treading on a buffalo, perhaps fighting against the evil forces. He has a long necklace of heads and the gaping mouth shows his tongue lolling out. Since he holds a sceptre with a skull top, he may represent Chos-rgyal phyi-sgrub (*bāhya-sādhana dharmarāja*)[27]. The red figure on the right side is called the Chos-rgyal gsaṅ-grub (*guhya-sādhana-dharamarāja*). Another figure, blue in colour, is without horns and badly damaged. He represents Chos-rgyal naṅ-sgrub (*antara-sādhana-dharmarāja*).[28] All the figures mentioned above are dwarf and sturdy and are the manifestations of the king of religion and the conqueror of the lord of the dead, Yāmantaka (gŚin-rje-gśed).

One of the best preserved murals in the mGon-khaṅ is on the south wall, above the forms of Yāmantaka. The local Buddhist community calls it a rDo-rje chen-mo 'khor-lo (the circle of rDo-rje chen-mo). This identification seems untenable for the reasons given below. The central deity sitting in *vajraparyaṅka* holds some indistinct objects in her hands. The figure has feminine features, especially a printed *sāṛī* which covers the entire body from the shoulders to the feet. On either side are shown thirteen figures, each group led by a bigger figure (the group on the right of the central figure is possibly headed by Remati). The identification of the scene becomes possible by the presence of seven horses and a Bārahsingā. The latter is the vehicle of Wi-ñu-myin, the protectress of Tabo. Therefore, we would like to identify the central figure as that of Wi-ñu-myin (Pl. LXVIII). The depiction of the protectress of Tabo



Pl. LXVIII The protectress of Tabo, top row of the south wall, mGon-khaṅ

over the entrance of the mGon-khaṅ served two main purposes: one, it suited the spiritual needs of the local population who had continuously worshipped her since the introduction of Buddhism in the Spiti valley by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po in the second half of the tenth century. Two, the dGe-lugs-pas who claimed themselves as the bKa'-gdams-pa gsar-ma (new bKa'-gdams-pa) did not find anything objectionable regarding the depiction of Wi-ñu-myin along with her entourage over the entrance since she was painted first as early as AD 996. Eight knots (instead of fixing the cloth with the wooden pegs), behind this scene are suggestive of some changes in stylistic conventions in the mGon-khaṅ.

Characteristic Features

It is not surprising to see that the walls are dominated by blue and red because the temple is dedicated to the tutelary deities. The aureole of the main figures does not remain round as seen in the previous styles but becomes oval-shaped with the lower part resting on a lotus flower. The *prabhāmaṇḍala*'s outermost part has been ornamented in a manner as if the petals have been joined together by the red aureole. The crescent designs in the curtain decorations, seen in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ and the

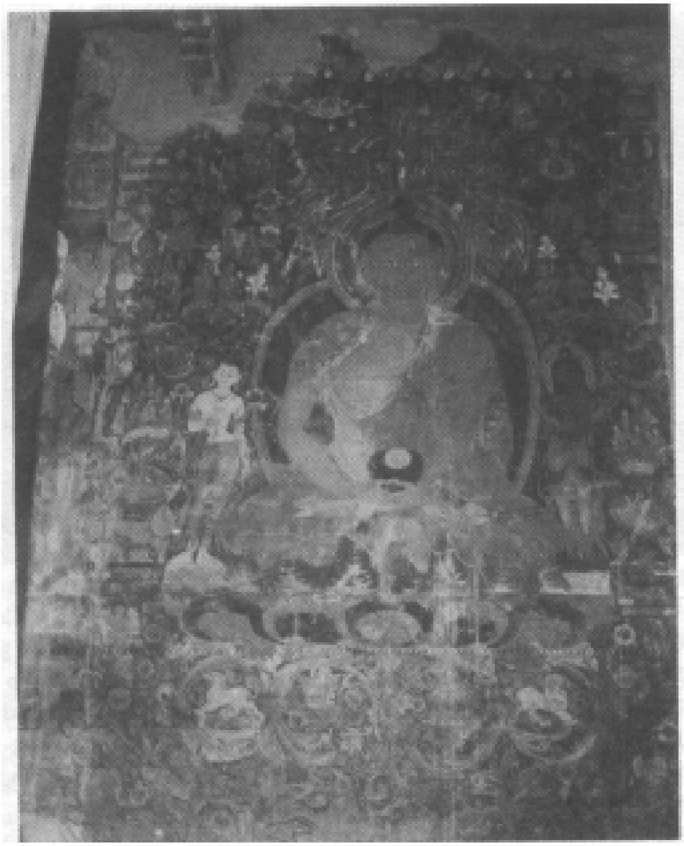
dKyil-khaṅ, are absent but now knots of the cloth become ornamental. The chain of the *kīrttimukhas* sprouting forth foliage also disappear. A series of female figures shown in the upper register on the south wall wear Tibetan costumes, and their hair is arranged in a single plait thus deviating from the stylistic conventions followed earlier in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Behind the *prabhāmaṇḍala* float clouds reminiscent of Tsaparang. The use of the crossed *yajñopavīta* (as has been done in the gSer-khaṅ and the dKyil-khaṅ), and the flowing scarfs in the air are some of the features borrowed from the earlier styles. Two types of skull-crowns are noticed: in the first variety, the crown is fixed on the head with a piece of cloth whose knots are tied above the ears, and several flames sprout forth from the skulls. The second variety, however, is of the *jaṭājuṭa* type. The multiplication of animals as the *vāhanas* of the major and secondary deities is indicative of the fact that the temple is dedicated to Mahāvajrabhairava.

MURALS OF THE 'BROM-STON LHA-KHAṄCHUṄ-BA: STYLE X

Architecturally, this temple belongs to phase II but the murals on the walls have been repainted sometime before those shown on the walls of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. The possible chronological sequence of these murals could be somewhere in the beginning of the sixteenth century AD. They are directly influenced by the stylistic idioms and the iconographic programme depicted in the gSer-khaṅ. The detailed analysis presented below will help in understanding these better, both stylistically and aesthetically.

Śākyamuni is depicted on the central wall. Maitreya and Mañjuśrī are shown on either side. Eighteen Arhats are arranged below the lotus seat of Śākyamuni. Uṣṇīṣavijayā and Amitābha appear on the south wall. The iconographic detail of Uṣṇīṣavijayā conforms to the one shown on the north wall of the gSer-khaṅ with an addition of attendants. Similarly, the mural of Amitābha (ht. *c.* 2.10 m) is shown in his paradise. The number of people in the assemblies around Amitābha has been reduced as compared to those seen in the gSer-khaṅ. Two lions who appear immediately below the lotus seat of Amitābha in the gSer-khaṅ are now replaced by two celestial birds, and the lions are pushed further aside. (Pl. LXIX).

Vairocana (ht. *c.* 2.20 m) and Green Tārā (ht. 2.10 m), noticed earlier in the gSer-khaṅ, are painted on the north wall. Vairocana's physiognomical details are similar to the ones painted on the central wall of the



Pl. LXIX Amitābha in his Sukhāvatī, south wall

dKyil-khaṅ. The broad shoulders, thin waist and round facial features are all comparable with the Vairocana depicted in the dKyil-khaṅ. In the form where he has four heads, and his hands are in *dhyāna-mudrā*, he is known as the sarvavid (*kun-rig*). The murals on the eastern walls have deteriorated to such an extent that no study can be made of them. They probably represent the four medicine Buddhas which are on either side of the entrance wall.[29]

Main Characteristics

The murals of Style X drew their iconographic inspiration from the gSer-

khaṅ but numerous stylistic changes are perceptible in the figurative modelling and in the application of colour. The number of Arhats has gone up from sixteen to eighteen. The decorative scheme is much simpler here; the crown, however, follows the same pattern but the five-feathered diadems have low heights. The acolytes of Uṣṇīṣavijayā's are new additions as they do not figure in the gSer-khaṅ. The style of Uṣṇīṣavijayā's blouse with the frontal side open remains the same as noticed earlier in style VII. The chain of the *kīrttimukhas* can be seen on the uppermost part of the walls and a single instead of three bead tassel hangs down the wall. Besides deriving decorative devices from earlier styles, the artists in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba introduced new trends from the Tibeto-Nepalese repertoire including the Chinese ethereal landscapes.

MURALS OF THE 'BROM-STON LHA-KHAṄ CHEN-PO: STYLE XI

The temple of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po is the second largest temple in the enclave, the largest being the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The wall decorations here are dominated by two major themes: the medicine Buddhas (Bhaiṣajyagurus) and the life of the Buddha. The latter theme also appeared earlier in the *maṇḍapa* of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. Such scenes traditionally represent the twelve moments of Buddha's life (*mdzad-pa bcu-gñis*). Amitābha, accompanied by Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, occupies the central wall. Also, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, with their positions changed, appear on the south and north walls of the sanctum. Four medicine Buddhas along with their attendants appear on the south and the north walls. Those painted on the south wall represent, from right to left: Dharmakīrtisāgaraghoṣa (Chos-sgrags rgya-mtsho'i-dbyaṅs), Śākyamuni as Siṁhanāda (rGyal-ba seṅ-ge'i ṅa-ro), Suvarṇabhadravimalaratnaprabhāsa (gSer-bzaṅ dri-med rin-chen snaṅ) and Svaraghoṣarāja (sGra-dbyaṅs rgyal-po). Those depicted on the north wall represent, from left to right: Abhijñārāja (mṄon-mkhen rgyal-po), Vaiḍūryaprabharāja (sMan-bla Baiḍūrya-'od), Ratnaśikhin (?) and Suparikīrtitanāmaśrī (?).

The attendant of each medicine Buddha has a scroll with a fully-blossomed flower at the top on which rest some attributes. What is common to all figures is the outer semi-arched frame enclosing a medicine Buddha and his attendants. For this reason they are stylistically distinguishable from the medicine Buddhas painted in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ and from those painted at Dankhar. The *mudrā* of each attendant is clearly distinguishable. The style of the low-profiled five-feathered

crown is comparable with the crown of Uṣṇīṣavijayā shown in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba.

The murals relating to the life of the Buddha are repeated on the south and north walls of the 'Du-khaṅ, immediately below the seated figures of the medicine Buddhas. The first act is the same as that noted earlier in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, i.e. the handing over of the crown to Maitreya.[30] Thereafter, a greyish[31] elephant is shown twice. The next scene is that of Māyā's conception as she is shown lying on a bed surrounded by three female attendants, one of them holding a bowl of water (?) in her hands. One of the scenes on the same wall is culled from the chapter 'Śilpasaṅdarśanaparivarta' of the *Lalitavistara*.[32] The Buddha shows his skill in archery by shooting the targets set up by Devadatta, Sundarananda and Daṇḍapāṇi. The last two scenes on the north wall relate to the Buddha's last journey. One of them shows the Buddha lying down on a bed. The accompanying inscription appropriately reads: *de nas sñuṅ ba'i tshul mdzad pa'o* referring to the illness of the Buddha.[33] In the following scene numerous people are gathered around the cremation site. Then follows the depiction of the eight *stūpas*. They can be identified with the help of inscriptions inscribed below.[34]

Upper row:
1. *byaṅ-chen*, Buddha's final enlightenment
2. *dben-'dun*, of reconciliation
3. *lha-babs*, descent from heaven
4. *rnam-rgyal*, of victory

Lower row:
5. *kra-śis sgo-maṅ*, of many doors
6. inscription illegible, but of Vaiśālī
7. *pad-mo spuṅ-ba*, lotus-shaped
8. *khaṅ-rtsegs*, of *nirvāṇa*

This list[35] largely conforms to the scheme painted on the walls of the Red temple at Tsaparang.[36]

Main Characteristics

The medicine Buddhas along with their attendants assumed an important place among the variety of decorations in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. Vaiḍūryaprabharāja's bowl has faded away but it is clearly visible in the gSer-khaṅ. It seems likely that the painters copied it subsequently in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ and the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ. Multi-storeyed

pho-brañs (palaces) are typical of Tibetan origin. The broad-leaved trees also appear here and there. The appearance of the lion-faced *bhadra-mukhas* at the highest level on the walls is unique. On either side of the *bhadramukha* appears stylized foliage which has been copied later by artists working in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. A single tassel is beautifully suspended between each fold. The rows of the full-blown flowers appearing on the ceiling were obviously copied from the ceiling of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. A pair of Nāgas facing each other is one of the best examples of the early-seventeenth-century mural traditions of Spiti. Eight *stūpas* are depicted here for the first and the last time for they do not appear in the temples constructed in the subsequent period.

MURALS OF THE DKAR-'BYUṄ LHA-KHAṄ: STYLE XII

No inscription has been noticed in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ, but the murals painted on its walls are similar to those in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. The representation of the eight medicine Buddhas on the north wall and the chain of lion-faced *bhadramukhas* in the uppermost section on the four walls is reminiscent of similar decorations in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. Apart from the cloth, stylized foliage also emerges from the lion's mouth.[37] Such decorations are only visible in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. The style of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* is different from the one used in Style XI. In some cases the artists have reverted to a round aureole instead of the oval-shaped type as seen in Style IX. The aureole of some figures on the west and the south wall is a simplified version of the one shown in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. A third variety of aureole is seen in the mural of mGon-po phyag-drug (six-armed Mahākāla).

The western wall does not show anything spectacular except for the much repeated theme of Śākyamuni (ht. 1.37 m) along with the eighteen Arhats (Pl. LXX). Maitreya and Mañjuśrī as usual appear on the proper right and left of Śākyamuni.

The south wall's decorations include Tsoṅ-kha-pa and his two disciples, rGyal-tshab-rje and mKhas-grub-rje. They are collectively called the *yab-sras-gsum* (master and his spiritual sons). The depiction of this triad brings the development of the reformed sect to a final end.

About forty per cent of the murals on the north wall have been washed away completely by water trickling down the walls, though a group of eight medicine Buddhas is fully preserved. The four figures in the upper row represent: (i) Dharmakīrtisāgaraghoṣa, (ii) Suvarṇa-



Pl. LXX Murals of the Arhats on the left of Śākyamuni, dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ

bhadravimalaratnaprabhāsa, (iii) Abhijñānarāja, (iv) Aśokottamaśrī. The lower row has: (i) Svaraghoṣarāja, (ii) Vaiḍūryaprabharāja (but he looks like Akṣobhya without the iron bowl in his lap, and a twig of myrobalan plant, the symbol of the power of healing), (iii) Śākya-thub-pa, and (iv) Ratnaśikhin. The three medicine Buddhas and the Śākyamuni are shown in *dharmacakra-mudrā*. Ratnaśikhin's left hand instead of being on his lap has been shown in *vitaraka-mudrā*. The round outer *prabhāmaṇḍala* which brings the entire figure discussed above, along with the nimbus and the aureole, within its limits is comparable to the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the medicine Buddhas painted in the upper temple at Dankhar. The murals of Avalokiteśvara and Amitāyus are partially visible.

The entrance wall, above the door, has Sruṅ-ma along with her two female attendants. Bārahsingā and two horses are clearly visible. Standing over the protruding body in the south-east corner is Mahākāla with six arms. This form of mGon-po is the most popular of the seventy-five manifestations. He is surrounded by flames and wears a crown of skulls. In one hand he holds before his chest a skull-cup and in the other a chopper with the thunderbolt handle. In the other four he holds a rosary, a trident-lance, a double drum and a demon-noose.

Main Characteristics

The murals in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ do not show any trace of renovation. Stylistically, they are later than the murals painted in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. It would be worthwhile to compare a few important decorative features of the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ with Style XI. In the temple under discussion, the two folds of cloth which sprout from the lion's mouth do not have the hanging tassel(s). The stylized foliages on either side of the lion's face make the decorations much more ornamental. Such decorations appear for the first time in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. Tsoṅ-kha-pa and his disciples are shown in *dharmacakra-mudrā*, deviating slightly from the fixed iconographic typology, but each one of them is clearly distinguishable by his attributes. The attendants of the medicine Buddhas are not shown here and their aureoles seem to be a simplified version of the ones used for the medicine Buddhas in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. The Chinese-type clouds fill up the blank space around the flamed-aureole of the Mahākāla. This type of aureole developed over a long time in the western-Himalayan region. It originated in Nepal and travelled westward to the areas of Gu-ge and Purang, and from there to Spiti and Ladakh.[38] The *viśvavajra* divides the profane and the sacred space on the walls and the interior side of the door. This is the last temple within the sacred enclosure where the protectress of Tabo appears over the door with her favourite vehicle, the Bārahsingā.

MURALS OF THE BYAMS-PA'I LHA-KHAṄ: STYLE XIII

There are here at least three different overlapping styles, possibly representing three chronological phases in this temple. The earliest style representing the original phase has been totally destroyed. I have made it clear that the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ was the second temple established at Tabo soon after the foundation of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ (Fig. 7). Twenty-one Tārās and the accompanying inscription on the north wall of the sanctum represent the original style corresponding to architectural phase II analysed in chapter III. The arrangement of the eight medicine Buddhas (now only seven are visible) on the walls of the *maṇḍapa*—a group of three on the north and the south walls each, and one figure on either side of the entrance wall—has been done hapazardly.[39] Two inscribed panels in the *maṇḍapa* make it possible to suggest a possible date for the redecorations carried out in the temple. The panel depicted on

the eastern wall clearly shows that it has been painted over the earlier decorations. Therefore, the identification of the main dGe-lugs-pa authorities displayed prominently in the panels is crucial for establishing the chronology of the decorations.[40]

A large panel on the western wall of the *maṇḍapa* shows an important dGe-lugs-pa incarnate in a seated position on an elevated wooden platform. The left hand holds a *pothī*, and the right hand is in *abhaya-mudrā*. Tucci has identified him as Vajra-śes-rab.[41] His identification is based primarily on a figure embossed on the *tsha-tsha* which he discovered from Stok near Leh. The plate XLa in his *Indo-Tibetica*[42] is wrongly captioned Tsoṅ-kha-pa instead of Vajra-śes-rab. The circular legend on the margin clearly reads: *vajra śes rab la na mo*, i.e. 'salutation to Vajra-śes-rab'. Does the figure shown in a mural in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ represent Vajra-ses-rab? The figure shown on the *tsha-tsha* from Stok is in *dharmacakra-mudrā*, not in *abhaya-mudrā*. He seems to represent the seventh Dalai Lama (AD 1708-57), Blo-bzaṅ skal-bzaṅ rgya-mtsho.[43] He normally holds the blockprint with its brocade envelope in his left hand and in the right he holds the root of a flower (Pl. LXXI). The figure at Tabo holds a folio of a book in his left hand and the right hand is raised upwards, omitting the lotus flower. Numerous items used for liturgical performances are placed on an altar-table arranged in front of him: the offerings, a vessel for consecrated water (*ril-pa spyi-blugs*) and three ritual bowls including the *gze-zhal* (special ritual bowl). Several flat-roofed buildings, topped by flags, are shown in the background. Two have upturned eaves typical of the Chinese style. Nineteen other *dge-sloṅs*, all wearing religious robes are listening to the teachings of the Dalai Lama with rapt attention. The loaded mules are shown below just outside the entrance in a grove of trees. The scene seems to depict a religious ceremony of the Kālacakra type attended by the *dge-sloṅs* belonging to the Yellow sect. A single line of partially legible inscription on the red border supports the identification offered above. The full text and the translation have been analysed in the following chapter. Suffice it to say here that it refers to the lord of the religion, the *nātha* (protector or patron) of all living beings. The name of the Dalai Lama is omitted but the epithet *nor-bu rin-po-che* (precious gem) further tends to indicate that the person referred to in the inscription cannot be other than the Dalai Lama.

Another equally interesting panel, measuring 1 m by 1.22 m, is the one in the north-eastern corner of the entrance wall. The principal person, shown seated beneath a two-tiered tower, is almost in the centre of

the composition. The *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the figure is not shown. On either side of this incarnate Lama are gathered a number of monks representing the Buddhist community of the Tabo monastery. The great incarnate Lama, the lord of religion, Blo-bzaṅ dpal-ldan,[44] the main figure, is identified with the help of an inscription.

As pointed out earlier, the murals preserved in this temple belong to three chronological phases. The earliest phase, whose characteristics remain unclear, can be dated to the second half of the eleventh century AD.[45] Eight medicine Buddhas[46] and numerous other deities including Padmasambhava belong to the close of the seventeenth century.[47] Two panels discussed above were painted sometime in the second half of the eighteenth century when the iconographic features of the Dalai Lamas and the Paṇ-chen Lamas were standardized as is amply borne out by the Lamaistic pantheons recovered from China. If there existed any distinct style in the Byam-pa'i lha-khaṅ which differed from the styles XI and XII it could be Style XIII. To give this style an independent nomenclature is justifiable for the following reasons.

What is entirely different here are the sloping roofs with upturned eaves. This feature is conspicuous in its absence in the other styles. An unusual *svasti* symbol, normally used with the War-tu inscriptions, is the only one used at Tabo. The use of *śad*, too, is quite different at the end of the inscriptions.[48] A single entrance, leading to the complex, is normally given at the ground level. The wooden seat and the stool used for arranging the items of worship in front of the Dalai Lama are fascinating, and not seen in the earlier murals of Tabo. Such iconography emerged from Central Tibet around the sixteenth–seventeenth century. Multicoloured clouds appear in both panels, unlike those in Styles VIII, IX, X, XI and XII.

Murals of the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ and their Characteristics

If the account of Tabo monastery given by Thomas Hutton is any indication then the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ did not exist in 1838. The plan of the monastic complex prepared by Francke in 1909 clearly shows that the temple under discussion had come into existence by 1909. Many contemporary inscriptions appear on the walls, all of which are of iconographic interest, and are discussed below.

Three rows of murals are painted on the eastern wall towards the right side. Listed below are transcriptions of the names of figures.[49]

Top register (from left to right):

1. ri rdzoṅ sras sprul sku |
2. paṇ chen nā ro pa |
3. rgyal ba rgya mtsho'i rigs bdag rdo rje chos |
4. lha brtsun (btsun) rin po che |
5. śu gru skyabs mgon.

Middle row:

1. tshe dpag med |
2. spyan ras zigs |
3. rje brtsun (btsun) sgrol ma |
4. rnam 'drin ('dren) bzhi pa go'u tam lha'i lha ||
5. khro bo mi gyo ba |

Lower row:

1. saṅs rgyas rnam par gzigs la na mo
2. bde gśegs grtsug-tor (gtsug-tor) can la na mo
3. thams cad skyobs la na mo
4. 'khor ba 'jigs la na mo
5. ser thub la na mo
6. 'od sruṅs la na mo

Twenty-one figures are identifiable on the south wall. Fifteen of them are painted on the top row, which extends from the south-east corner to the middle of the same wall. Transcriptions of the names, from left to right, are

Top row:

1. 'das pa'i saṅs rgyas mar me dzad (mdzad) |
2. da lta saṅs rgyas sa kya thub |
3. ma 'oṅs saṅs rgyas 'byam (byams) pa mgon |
4. rigs (reg) bya yi lha mo.
5. ro yi lha mo |
6. dri yi lha mo |
7. dgra (sgra) yi lha mo |
8. gzugs kyi lha mo |
9. lo chen rin chen bzaṅ po |[50]
10. 'brom ston rgyal pa'i byuṅ ('byuṅ) gnas |
11. jo bo a ti śa |
12. bla ma gser gliṅ pa
13. rje dge ba can |
14. rje btsum kus li |
15. slob dpoṅ seṅ ge bzaṅ po

In the middle row two figures are without inscriptions. The other four represent:

1. rnams (rnam) par snaṅ mdzad la na mo ||
2. don yod sgrubs (sgrub) pa la na mo ||
3. snaṅ ba mtha' yas la na mo |
4. rin chen 'byuṅ gnas la no mo |

The north wall has a partially legible inscription written below the lotus cushion of Avalokiteśvara. It reads: *śiṅ sta<g> spyi ti dgon zhig gsos gnaṅ mkhan bla ma gsam* (*bsam*) *gtan rdo rje*. It refers to *bla-ma* bSam-gtan rDo-rje who repaired the *dgon-pa* in the wood-tiger year corresponding to 1974.[51]

Before commenting on the inscriptions and the murals discussed above I would like to make an assessment of other murals in the temple. The western wall has the murals of Śākyamuni and Tsoṅ-kha-pa on either side of the entrance leading to the sGo-khaṅ of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The Buddha is surrounded by eighteen Arhats, nine on either side (Pl. LXXII). Tsoṅ-kha-pa's two disciples are shown bare-headed and not with their conical dGe-lugs-pa hats as is shown in the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. The panel on Amitābha is equally interesting. The acolytes of Amitābha are shown outside the aureole. The typology of the tree of wisdom is changed completely. In the upper left corner is depicted Guhyasamāja Mañjuvajra. The same deity also appears in a similar posture in the cave monastery. The depiction of the eight medicine Buddhas—five on the south wall and three on the north wall (right side)—continues. The artists working in the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ have borrowed stylistic idioms from the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po, especially by showing the attendants of the medicine Buddhas with the attributes in their hands.

It is amply clear from the transcriptions of inscriptions that numerous orthographic mistakes occur in them. The corrected versions are shown in paranthesis. Ten names end with the dictum *la na mo,* an expression of salutation. The presence of Nāropa with the epithet *paṇ-chen* is amazing but not unexpected as we have noticed the names of the Indian Siddhas in the dKyil-khaṅ. The painters have correctly depicted the six Buddhas of the past on the eastern wall but another set of three Buddhas of the past (*'das-pa*), present (*da-lta*) and future (*ma-'oṅs*) are shown on the south wall. Apart from the names of the well-known translators and scholars such as Rin-chen bzaṅ-po, Atīśa and 'Brom-ston there are also the murals of gSer-gliṅ-pa, rJe-btsun Kus-li and *ācārya* Seṅ-ge

bzaṅ-po (Haribhadra). Haribhadra was a great scholar in the *Prajñāpāramita* system. Five-feathered crowns worn by the two Bodhisattvas accompanying Amitābha in his paradise, and the scarfs spread over the shoulders are reminiscent of the sixteenth–seventeenth century art idioms. The murals in question seem to be earlier than the other decorations shown on the eastern and the southern walls of the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ. The chain of the lion-faced *bhadramukhas* have now disappeared completely and new decorations in green and red have been introduced at the intersection of the walls and the ceiling.

STYLISTIC AMALGAM: THE EMERGENCE OF A 'STYLE' AND ITS NOMENCLATURE

Before presenting a summary of what we have discussed above in this and the previous chapter it is important to trace the sources of numerous styles and to assess their legacy in the pictorial history of Asia. How each style derived inspiration from the one which preceded it and influenced the next one is really like counting the beads which make up a full necklace. The murals of Tabo monastery offer to an art historian a nine-hundred-year-old story of evolution of at a single site, unlikely to be found elsewhere.

The murals in the sGo-khaṅ of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ represent the first artistic phase, and are unquestionably the earliest surviving remains of pictorial art in the western-Himalayan region. No contemporaneous fragments survive either in Ladakh or Himachal Pradesh.[52] The style of these murals derived from Kashmir and north-west India. The appearance of a single or double trimming band, repeated so often in the Tunhuang murals,[53] seems to have been originally derived from the Achaemenid and early Persian specimens.[54] Prior to its introduction in Tabo between AD 996–1000 the artists of Kashmir, Chamba, Trigarta and Kulūta tested its feasibility on both stone and wood.[55] The costume worn by the royal figures seems to have been widespread in Spiti, Kinnaur and also in other regions of the mṄa'-ris. The patterned *dhotīs* of the deities are much closer to the designs painted on the lower garments of the clay statues in the 'Du-khaṅ. The cape, which hangs from shoulder to ankle, of the group of eighteen females around Wi-ñu-myin is something remarkable from the viewpoint of the history of costumes. This seems to have been a western-Tibetanized version of the Persian and Central-Asian costume.[56] Further support for such possibilities is

evident from the use of the double-rimmed folds on the wide-collared coats of the *dge-sloṅ*. Such designs are traceable in Gandhara sculptures.[57] Similar elements are noticeable in Central-Asian paintings as early as the third century AD and in a few paintings from Swat in Afghanistan.

Style II served as the *terra firma* for the emergence of subsequent styles at Tabo around AD 1040. Major art influences from Kashmir, Chamba and Madhyadeśa are clearly discernible in this style. Pāla art idioms can be seen at this juncture on the lowest scale as there is no direct evidence of the presence of Pāla artists at Tabo. Pāla art exercised some influence at the imperial city of Kanauj during the eighth and ninth centuries for it is clear that the installation of Cakrāyudha at Kanauj was made with Pāla support.[58] The most conspicuous features of the Pāla school seem to have been absorbed by the artists working in Śatadru (Sirmaur and Simla Hills) and Kulūta, and obviously the artists directly associated with the renovation in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ inherited the art style from their masters.

The configuration of divine and human figures shown in the celestial *kūṭāgāras* or the royal mansions remind us of scenes seen in Central-Asian painting.[59] The pent roof, flat roof and the curvilinear roof over single or multi-storeyed structures show that the architects were well conversant with western-Himalayan architecture. One of decorative devices on the entrance of the *kūṭāgāras* is the row of wooden pendants decorating the lower edge of the eaves all around. Such decorative devices are noticed for the first time on the facade of the wooden temple of Lakṣaṇā Devī at Bharmaur (*c.* AD 700) and, subsequently, became the most common decorative element for the pent-roofed and the pagoda temples in Himachal Pradesh. There are clear indications in the gTsug-lag-khan that the Tibetan artists of the middle and lower mṄa'-ris were actively involved with Yasā and Rāmu in the mural decorations as Dum-bu[60] seems to be one such Tibetan artist who painted the outlines of the Tibetan costumes in the murals related to the story of Sudhana. The figurative form of Style II, however, was well proportioned and the painters have shown their inclination towards naturalistic forms. No multi-armed and multi-headed figure appears in Style II.

Style III, in many respects, was a fusion of I and II. The artists followed the prescribed texts for the iconographic exposition but there were enough areas within and outside the figurative forms where special skills could be displayed. The style totally assimilated the 'medieval Indian trend' in which the *mudrās* and *lakṣaṇas* became special features

of the gods and goddesses. It was in Style III that some of the decorative elements were standardized and followed in subsequent styles with minor modifications. The luminous zig-zag beam shown within the mandorla is one such decorative element which was favoured until Style VIII matured. The varieties of the *bhadramukhas* that first appeared at the entrance of a palace in Style II were another favourite choice of the artists. With the brilliant use of colours, and adhering strictly to the prescriptions of the textual sources, the artists could create numerous shades and designs for the monastic robes of the Thousand Buddhas. This become a source of satisfaction for the skilled painters who could depict the supranormal powers of the divinities by either showing them floating above their seats or by adding arms, heads and various attributes. This tendency was never abandoned in the subsequent styles. Style III is perhaps the most luminous of all the fourteen styles examined at Tabo.

The artists who painted the murals of Style IV, though, followed the conventions set forth in Style III, but the predilection for invention continued. That two specific Buddhist texts *dPaṅ-skoṅ phyag-brgya-pa mdo* and *Niṣpannayogāvalī* were in their hands but the juxtaposition of form and fantasy continued in the compositions. Style IV followed very soon after III. Certain variations occur in the figurative delineation and draftsmanship. Not only do we see a perfection in displaying the hand gestures of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions but the artists were capable of showing numerous *bhāvas* (moods): ferocious, blissful, meditative and placid. The textile patterns appear in the previous style, but the portion of the *dhotīs* of the Bodhisattvas that drape the relaxing legs is amply decorated with the varied designs. The use of the resplendent colours is as brilliant as in Style III. The appearance of the raised applique[61] and the double-rimmed folds on the robes of the Buddhas of ten directions are natural yet vibrant. The double-rimmed folds on the chest and the arms (also noticeable in Style I) look like crescents. Such decorations originated during the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods, and seem to have been stored by the Gandharan and Gupta sculptures until the Kashmiri artists borrowed them.

The murals of style V contain both heavenly and earthly figures. The garments of the royal figures come to an abrupt end. The artists lacked neither grandiloquent perception nor the ability to actually apply such vivid colours. The vigilant Śrāvakas appear in the *namaskāra-mudrā* (*phyag-'tshal phyag-rgya*), with hands folded in front of the chest (Pl. LIX). The life-size elongated female attendants on the sanctum's walls

have their scarfs fluttering below the shoulders with magnificent designs on them. Similar designs are today woven on the shawls and scarfs manufactured in Kulu and Spiti. It is quite possible that some of the artists from the Kulu valley were engaged in the renovations. The ecstatic look of Byaṅ-chub-'od beneath the royal umbrella with the state insignia is depicted here as the protector of Buddhism. He is sitting on a seat with two rotating wheels underneath.

The cloth paintings on the ceiling of the sanctum and the assembly hall are prime representatives of Style VI. The figurative forms of the flying goddesses, especially the low-relief rendering of the breasts, tend to suggest that some of these elegant panels were painted either by the lower mṄa'-ris artists who seem to have integrated the Pāla idioms with the Nepalese repertoire or were executed by Pāla masters who were well conversant with the Nepalese artistic vocabulary. The direct involvement of the Nepalese artists, however, seems unlikely. Byaṅ-chub-'od who was in Tholing to receive Atīśa in AD 1042, in my estimate, seems to have deputed some artists at Tabo from Tholing for completing the ongoing repairs.[62]

Evidence prevents us from stating that no mural decorations were accomplished during architectural phase II. What seems absolutely clear is that as soon as the construction of the gSer-khaṅ begun the art activity also gained momentum. By the middle of the fifteenth century the 'middle mṄa'-ris' style had matured to such an extent that it influenced the art creations of the upper and lower mṄa'-ris as well. Six styles belonging to the architectural phase I served as ready 'manuals' to the painters working in the gSer-khaṅ. The dGe-lugs-pa artists seem to have been influenced by the art idioms of Central Tibet, Nepal and the transitional eastern India. Many decorative elements from Styles II to VI remained favourites with the artists. They included sashes, streamers, triple-pointed crowns, pearled roundels and the lion-faced *bhadramukhas*. A new crown of Tibeto-Nepalese origin emerged. New popular themes were chosen by the artists, such as the medicine Buddha,[63] Arhats, popular *maṇḍalas*, and Mañjuśrī and Maitreya. They made brilliant use of colours as can be seen from the exquisite details of the gem encrustation interspersed with foliage and decorations on the *dhotī* of Maitreya on the central wall. The paintings on the ceiling demonstrate the adoption of the Chinese-type cloud formations which appear with the whimsical spiral turns in Style XIII.

The dKyil-khaṅ's Style VIII while retaining the most elegant features of the previous styles shows new trends that may have Tibetan origins.

The 'Tibetan style' was emerging as an independent style in design, in colour and in composition under the Sa-skya-pa's political control in Central Tibet.[64] The layout of the *maṇḍala* in this style seems to have been influenced by the works of Bu-ston. An irregular adjustment of the *aṣṭa-maṅgala* signs is used as a space-filling decorative device rather than arranging them in sequence. The brimmed end of Vairocana's *dhotī* reminds us of the robes of the Buddhas of ten directions in Style IV. By the middle of the fifteenth century the Tibeto-Nepalese style had already assimilated the late Pāla (*śar-mthun*), Chinese and the Khotanese[65] art idioms, but it remained confined to places such as Gyantse, Samada, Iwang and Tsaparang. The Chinese influence is visible especially in the landscapes serving as background to figures and to the great scenes of paradise.

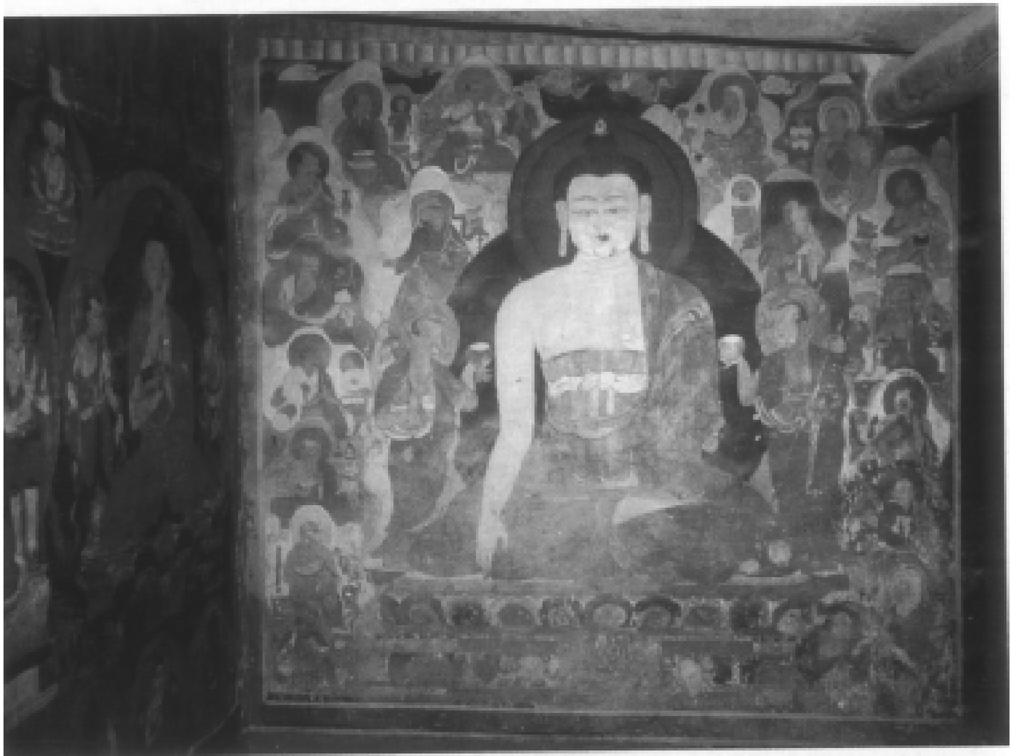
The artists working in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba selected many of the figures which appeared earlier in the gSer-khaṅ. The low profiled trilobed archways appear whimsical. The green frilled ends of Amitābha's robe contrast with the saffron of the upper robe. The *vāhanas* of the deities look like caricatures, and the blank spaces are filled with floral motifs and dark clouds. The people shown in the Sukhāvatī scene are kneeling, praying, adoring and discussing the teachings of Amitābha. It incorporates the stylistic elements of mṄa'-ris-Tibeto-Nepali and Chinese styles.

From now onwards the mṄa'-ris style gradually started falling into disfavour and the 'Tibetan style' assumed a more important place. There were no longer any Kashmiri, Nepali or east-Indian artisans employed and both iconography and draftsmanship and the colour schemes were dominated by the western-Tibetan masters who traversed regularly between Ladakh, in the west, and Tsaparang and Tholing, in the east. The artists in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po were simply emulating what was accomplished on the walls of the Red temple at Tsaparang. The life of the Buddha and the eight medicine Buddhas were the two favourite themes of the artisans. The symmetrical arrangement of self-contained deities can be seen around the central figure. The M-type design below the lotus seat, so beautifully painted in Styles VIII, IX, X and XI, now becomes a little distorted, particularly in Style XI. The Tibetanized version of the Nepali aureole with the flaming circle decoration encompasses the shortish figure of Mahākāla and his entourage.

Two surviving panels in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ represent the culmination of the Sino-Tibetan style at Tabo. The Chinese influence is noticed not only in the depiction of the multi-coloured spiral clouds on



Pl. LXXI Scene of Po-ta-la with the Seventh Dalai Lama Blo-bzaṅ skal-bzaṅ rgya-mtsho on the western wall of the Byams-pa'i lha khaṅ's *maṇḍapa*



Pl. LXXII Śākyamuni along with two disciples and the eighteen Arhats, west wall

the walls but also in the upturned eaves of the palaces. The Tibetan influence is stronger than the Chinese as can be noticed in the cluster of flat-roofed structures all topped by flags. The arrangement of numerous ritual items in front of the Dalai Lama, and the style of serving tea or water in typical Tibetan vessels show definite Central-Tibetan origins.

Two styles are noticeable in the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ excluding the murals painted in 1974. Some panels are true copies of Styles XII and XIII and those murals depicted on the walls of the cave monastery, but the majority of them represent Style XIV. They were completed in the nineteenth century. The depiction of the Buddhas of the three times—past, future and present (*dus-gsum saṅs-rgyas*)—symbolized the eternal revelation of the law. The artists have painted the most popular visual images, that of Sukhāvatī, Tsoṅ-kha-pa, Śākyamuni, the medicine Buddhas and translators such as Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and Haribhadra.

Lastly, the nomenclature of the mural styles needs to be commented upon. Each style had its peculiar characteristics, but it shared at the same time idioms of the one which immediately preceded it. At least eleven styles of Tabo share with each other some features which prompted me to give them a common name. Giuseppe Tucci in his *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* has tried to give the term 'Gu-ge style'[66] for the murals adorning the walls of several temples in Gu-ge, Purang, Spiti and Ladakh. There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the use of the 'Gu-ge-style'. Terms such as 'Kashmiri-Tibetan style', 'Khache-Tibetan style', 'Indo-Tibetan style', 'western-Himalayan style' and 'Kadampa style' have also been used by art historians for a mural style which prominently flourished in Gu-ge and Purang between the second half of the tenth and the middle of the seventeenth century AD.

I would like to call this the 'mṄa'-ris style' and fragments of this style have survived in the monastic centres of Ladakh and Zangskar (Jammu and Kashmir), Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur (Himachal Pradesh), and places such as Tholing, Mang-nang, Khojarnath, Dunkar, Piyang, Dombu, all situated in the former kingdoms of Gu-ge, Purang and Yatshe.

The style was born and developed in the mṄa'-ris region and its *terminus ad quem* came when the region was dominated both culturally and politically by Central Tibet. The term finds support from the inscriptions and Tibetan literary sources. The mṄa'-ris style can be subdivided into: mṄa'-ris stod (upper mṄa'-ris); mṄa'-ris bar (middle mṄa'-ris), Lahaul (Gar-zha), Spiti (sPyi-ti) and Kinnaur (Khu-nu); and mṄa'-ris smad (lower mṄa'-ris). The style has three phases at Tabo: early phase (I), mature phase (II–VI), and transitional phase (VII–XI)

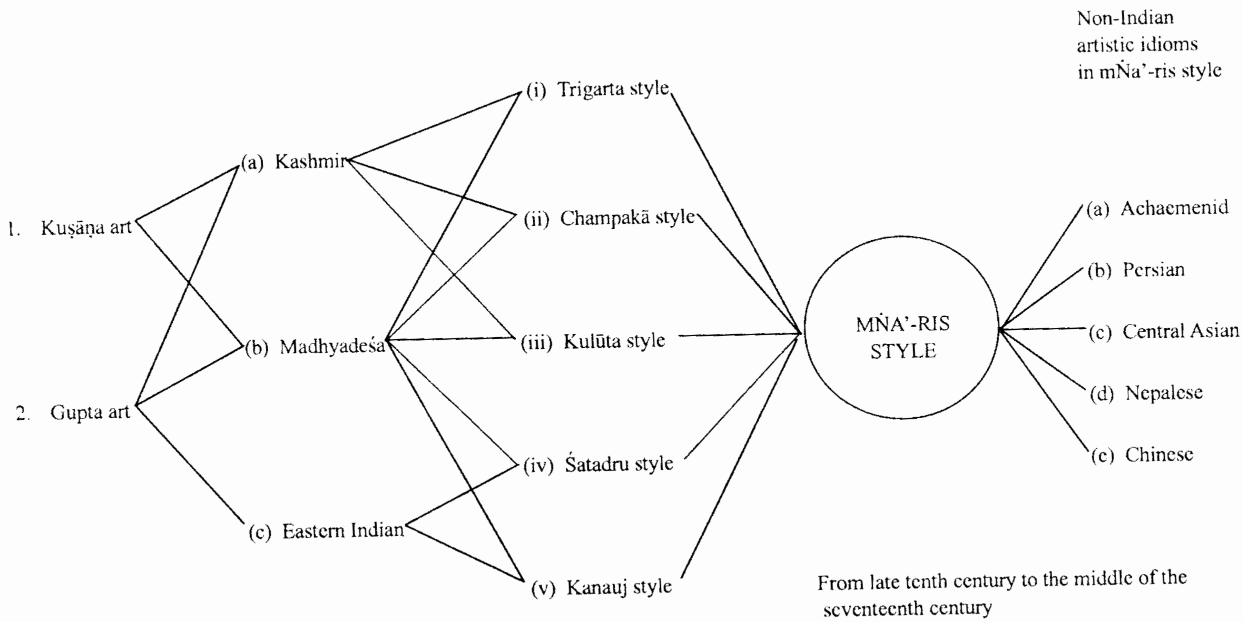
The mṄa'-ris style emerged in the second half of the tenth century when the artists were in great demand during the second diffusion of Buddhism. The migrations of artists to these kingdoms from contiguous regions caused this style to assume a definite character. The most invigorating influences came from Kashmir from where thirty-two artists from diverse social strata were directly engaged by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po and Ye-śes-'od in the construction and decoration of early Buddhist complexes at Nyarma, Tholing and Khva-char.[67] Apart from Kashmiri idioms, the art influences from Chamba, Trigarta, Kulūta, Simla Hills and Kanauj influenced the mṄa'-ris style (see Table 9). The art styles referred to above incorporated new art waves emanating from Madhyadeśa, western and eastern India.

The late Gupta art influences are clearly discernible in the early Pāla art of eastern India. The territorial expansion of the Pālas under Dharamapāla (*c.* AD 770–815) up to the Gangetic doab, and the installation of Cakrāyudha at Kānyakubja seems to indicate how the Pālas, with the early help of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, exercised some influence in northern India. The Khalimpur grant goes on to state that among others, the kings of Yavana, Gandhāra and Kīra readily accepted Cakrāyudha as Pāla's potentate.[68] The foundation of the Vikramaśilā, Somapurī and Odantapurī monasteries in eastern India was of far greater importance than the western territorial acquisitions of the Pālas. The consolidation of power by the Gurjara-Pratihāras at Kanauj and their expansionist policies brought Kulūta and Śatadru under their control.[69] The cultural influence of the Gurjara-Pratihāras was much stronger and also influenced the arts of the region to a considerable extent.

Traces of some non-Indian styles are also visible in the mṄa'-ris style. The Achaemenid, Persian and Central-Asian elements can be seen in Styles I to VI. I do not think that any artist or architect from these regions was actually present but the finer elements of the schools mentioned above seem to have been practised by the artisans in the north-west. The Nepali and Chinese influences started appearing from Style VII onwards. The Chinese style (*rgya-nag-lugs*) started dominating after the seventeenth century, and the mṄa'-ris style languished by the middle of the same century. The term 'mṄa'-ris style' cannot be used for the Styles XII, XIII and XIV at Tabo because these styles are dependent on the Chinese-Tibeto-Nepali traditions that make up the Central-Tibetan style. Rather than giving this style a nomenclature of a political nature, i.e. 'Gu-ge style', as has been done by Tucci and his pupils, it would be appropriate to call this style 'mṄâ'-ris style' which seems to be

TABLE 9

Two north-Indian art styles, their regional schools and the emergence of the 'mṄa'-ris style'



acceptable from the geographical, cultural and political points of view. Style is essentially a medium of aesthetic sensibilities and of visual expression which does not fade out or disappear with the collapse of an empire or a religious sect, its ramifications being much wider and longer lasting.

Interestingly, fourteen major mural styles at Tabo assimilated the art idioms of major Asian pictorial traditions extending from the Achaemenid and Persian empires in the west to the Chinese in the Far East, Central Asian in the north to Madhyadeśa in the south. The monastic precinct is not only sacred to the devout, but is also a living museum where innumerable folios of art are constantly displayed on the clay-plastered walls of the nine temples.

NOTES

1. The Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*, tr. F. Max Muller, *SBE*, vol. XLIX, rpt, Delhi, 1965, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 52.
3. Ibid., pp. 31–2.
4. Ibid., p. 42.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. The world of Sukhāvatī depicted in the gSer-khaṅ has been repeated in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba and the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ, respectively.
8. This *mudrā* is called the *vajrahuṅkāra-mudrā*.
9. These features are the surviving proofs of the tenth–eleventh century art idioms.
10. *Sādhanamālā*, vol. II, ed. B. Bhattacharyya, Baroda, 1968, p. 394; *also see* sādhanas 211 and 212, pp. 417–21.
11. For the forms of Mañjuśrī, *see* Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Tokyo, 1962, pp. 110–13.
12. Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetica III.1), pp. 107–8.
13. Some of the designs depicted on the *dhotī* of Maitreya also appeared earlier in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, especially the fully-blossomed flowers with multi-coloured petals.
14. G. Tucci, 'Indian Paintings in Western Tibetan Temples', *AA*, vol. 7, 1937, p. 198, fig. 11.
15. So far the best available account on the murals of the temples at Tholing is given by Henss, 'Wall-paintings in Western Tibet', pp. 196-225.
16. *See* Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetica III.2).
17. There is, however, some ambiguity in the arrangement of the sixteen

Arhats—seven are depicted on the south-western corner and nine on the north-western corner.

18. For a similar *maṇḍala* of Śākyamuni, *see* P. Pal and Lionel Fournier, *A Buddhist Paradise: The Murals of Alchi, Western Himalayas*, Hong Kong, 1982, S77; also Snellgrove and Skorupski, *Cultural Heritage*, vol. I, p. 63, pl. 54.
19. *See* ch. VII.
20. S. C. Das, A *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (revised and ed. by G. Sandberg and A. William Heyde), Delhi, 1991, p. 1162.
21. Only the upper part of the mural survives, the lower portion being completely erased.
22. A similar arrangement of hair has not been noticed in styles I to VII. This seems to be a style which originated in Tsaparang; *see* Henss, op. cit., pl. 10, where several donors of Gu-ge have been depicted. Henss has proposed a date *c.* AD 1470–80 for the mural which seems a convincing date.
23. Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetia III.2) pp. 81-2.
24. I thank the Head Lama of Tabo monastery and the younger *dge-sloṅs* for allowing me to enter into the mGon-khaṅ to complete the survey *in situ.*
25. *See* Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet*, p. 93, pl. LXIV.
26. Eight auspicious symbols, however, also appear on the walls of the 'Du-khaṅ, gTsug-lag-khaṅ.
27. It is heartening to note that Lama bSod-nams sTobs-rgyas agreed to the identification proposed by us.
28. For more details, *see* B. C. Olschak and Geshé Thupten Wangyal, *Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet*, London, 1973, nos 238–40, p. 171. I am not very sure whether the three blue-coloured deities on the eastern wall represent the three goddesses—Caṇḍikā Devī, Dhūmavatī Devī and Śaṅkhapālī Devī as shown in the source cited above.
29. Below the panel of the four medicine Buddhas on the left wall appears a dGe-lugs-pa authority, possibly representing rGyal-tshab-rje.
30. An inscription calls him *Byams-pa rgyal-tshab.*
31. In the inscription his colour is mentioned as *dṅul* (white).
32. *Lalitavistara*, ch. 12, 45–7.
33. Inscribed below the scene on the north wall.
34. The author would like to thank Lama bSod-nams sTobs-rgyas of Tabo who helped in the final checking of the inscriptions written below the *mchod-rten*.
35. Those who are interested on the typology of the *stūpas* can see Tucci, *Stūpa: Art, Architectonics and Symbolism* (Indo-Tibetica I), Lokesh Chandra, et. al. (eds), New Delhi, 1988.
36. Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetica III.2), pp. 130–50, pls CXXI–CXXXVI.

37. This tendency is, however, noticeable in the gSer-khaṅ but the stylized ends emerged in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po.
38. This characteristic is also noticeable in the mGon-khaṅ.
39. Part of the south wall collapsed after the earthquake of 1975, and the medicine Buddhas have been repainted.
40. The remnants of the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of the medicine Buddha are partially visible.
41. Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetica III.1), p. 114.
42. *See* fn. 35.
43. There are several similarities between the mural at Tabo and a figure on the *thaṅ-ka* published by Olschak and Geshé Wangyal in *Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet*, p. 91.
44. Blo-bzaṅ dpal-ldan should not be considered the abbot of Tabo monastery. He is very clearly referred to as an 'incarnate Lama'.
45. One of the earliest narrative murals is partially visible on the central wall of the sanctum where a hound is pursuing a goat. The exact source of the scene, however, remains unidentified.
46. Retouched after the earthquake of 1975.
47. There are a total number of fourteen deities on the central wall, seven on either side of Maitreya. Those on the right represent Mahākāla, Mañjuśrī, Guhyasamāja Mañjuvajra, Padmasambhava, Amitāyus, Avalokiteśvara and Sita Cintāmaṇi Mahākāla. On the left are Maitreya, Śākyamuni, Cakrasamvara(?), Tsoṅ-kha-pa, Nāgārjuna, mKhas-grub-rje and rGyal-tshab-rje.
48. On the typology of *śad* and *svasti*, *see* ch. VII.
49. All inscriptions seem to have been written in 1974 (*śiṅ stag*, i.e. wood-tiger year) as specified in the inscription written below Avalokiteśvara at the entrance of the mGon-khaṅ.
50. Immediately below this inscription is painted a mural of dPal-ldan lha-mo.
51. If *sta* is read as *rta* it would be the wood-horse year corresponding to 1954. Lama sTobs-rgyas informed us that the murals were repainted sometime soon after the monastery was declared a protected monument of national importance. Thus the beginning of the inscription should be read as the *śiṅ-stag* (wood-tiger) year corresponding to 1974.
52. The Nandī image inscription from Bharmaur makes a reference to the paintings (*cittraiḥ*) in the *maṇḍapa* of the Maṇi Maheśa temple. The inscriptional reference is significant considering the later developments of Chamba paintings. For text and translation of this inscription, *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, Appendix I, pp. 148–9.
53. *See* Hsio-Yen Shih, 'Readings and Re-readings of Narrative in Dunhuang Murals', *AA*, vol. LIII, nos 1–2, 1993, pp.59–88, fig 17 (cave 428), fig. 18 (cave 299), and fig. 19 (cave 299). All illustrations belong to the Northern Zhou dynasty (AD 557–81). Similar examples have been re-

ported from the Central-Asian sites such as Kizil, *see* Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. II, pl. 47b.

54. Ackerman, 'Textiles Through the Sasanian Period', fig. 235.
55. At Masrur, the sculptors arranged the diamond lozenges within the trimming bands on the facade of the shrine nos 5 and 9; *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, pls VII and X.
56. Basil Gray, *Buddhist Cave Paintings at Tun-huang*, London, 1959, fig. 68.
57. Several examples are illustrated by Marylin M. Rhie in an article, 'Some Aspects of the Relation of 5th Century Chinese Buddha Images with Sculpture from North India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia', *EW*, vol. 26, nos 3-4, 1976, pp. 439–61. *Also see*, M. Bussagli, *Paintings of Central Asia*, Geneva, 1963.
58. R.S. Tripathi, *History of Kanauj to the Moslem Conquest*, rpt, Delhi, 1964, pp. 216–18.
59. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. II, p. 466.
60. The name is now illegible but the preceding legible letters *ri mo mkhan* clearly indicate that the name of the painter was written soon after *mkhan*.
61. *See* Rhie, 'Some Aspects', pp. 454–7, figs 33, 34, 37.
62. There are indications, especially in the sanctum, that the renovation work was suspended abruptly. The writers of the inscriptions could not complete the names of the Thousand Buddhas. The name of the Bodhisattva on the south wall (upper row) was also left incomplete.
63. I did not notice a mural of the medicine Buddhas in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.
64. *See* Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. I, pp. 279–82.
65. There are clear evidences of the presence of the Khotanese artists at Gyantse. *See* Tucci, *Gyantse and Its Monasteries* (Indo-Tibetica IV.2), Lokesh Chandra et al. (eds), New Delhi, 1989.
66. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. I, p. 275.
67. CBM. No. 3, fols 88–90; CBM, No. 6, fols 257–8, and also CBM, No.5, fols 174–5.
68. *See EI*, vol. IV, pp. 248, 252.
69. We have discussed this issue elsewhere; *see* Thakur, *Architectural Heritage*, pp. 14–15.



VIII

Surviving Epigraphic Evidence

The entire epigraphic evidence collected from Tabo has been presented and analysed chronologically in the present chapter. This is not the first time that inscriptions of Tabo have been analysed. But the study of the Śāradā and Tibetan inscriptions undertaken in this chapter is much wider in scope and the key issues of phonetics and philology have been addressed, where necessary. Many important inscriptions remained unnoticed, rather, concealed under thick layers of dust for over a thousand years. Unfortunately, the epigraphic material discussed below was not entirely available to two notable European Tibetologists, A.H. Francke and G. Tucci. The Romanized version of the text presented below is based partly on photographs and mostly on the copies prepared by me during the last decade. Each inscription has subsequently been re-examined *in situ* several times to ensure the correctness of the copies prepared for historical, epigraphical and palaeographic analysis.

The discovery of new Tibetan inscriptions of historical and devotional nature and the discovery of three[1] Śāradā inscriptions in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ is a very gratifying experience as it adds new information for the student of palaeography and epigraphy. The presence of the Śāradā inscriptions suggests that the craftsmen recruited for the decoration of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ belonged to those regions of the western Himalaya where Śāradā script was generally used as a medium of literary expression. Two regions immediately come to mind: Kashmir and Chamba. The Tibetan inscriptions can be divided into six categories: (i) rock inscriptions; (ii) stone pillar inscriptions; (iii) wall inscriptions; (iv) *maṇi*-wall inscriptions; (v) paper inscriptions, and (vi) metal image inscriptions. Of the six types of inscriptions available from Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur only three varieties have been found at Tabo. The rock

inscriptions represent the earliest phase dating back to the eighth century AD, and the three paper inscriptions belong to the last phase dated AD 1838 and AD 1847 respectively.[2] The contents of the inscriptions can be classified in three groups: (i) historical, (ii) narrative, and (iii) devotional. The narrative inscriptions, especially those illustrating the scenes from the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*, are excluded from the present study for want of space. The entire corpus of such inscriptions has been treated comprehensively in a separate study.[3]

THE ŚĀRADĀ INSCRIPTIONS

The most observant of all European Tibetologists, A.H. Francke has recorded the presence of the Śāradā characters from Nako,[4] but he did not mention those of Tabo. G. Tucci, too has maintained complete silence on them. In a recent study, one such inscription has been wrongly attributed to the *'devanagri'* [sic] script.[5] There are three Śāradā inscriptions, two inscribed on the eastern wall of the circumambulation and the third on the northern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ.

Inscription 1

It appears below the lotus-seat of an unidentified Mahābodhisattva in the *skor-lam*. A semi-circular border has been provided for the Śāradā inscription. Roughly, one-third of the total text is completely destroyed. The size of the letters varies from 1.5 cm to 2 cm (Pl. LXXIII).

Text

[...][6] gato hyavada[7] teśaṁ[8] ca yo ṇirodhaṁ evaṁ vādī ma [hāśra] vaṇaḥ [||]

Translation

After restoring the damaged portion the following translation can be made: 'Those *dharmas* which arise from a cause, the Tathāgata has declared their cause. And that which is the cessation of them, thus the great renunciant has taught.'[9]

Commentary

The text contains two orthographic mistakes as we notice the use of *śa* for *ṣa* and *ṇi* for *ni*. Also the final *d* in the *hyavadad* of the Tibetan version, and *t* of Sanskrit rendering, is absent. It is interesting to compare



Pl. LXXIII A single line Śāradā inscription in the circumambulation of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ

the Sanskrit version written in the Śāradā script in the Tibetan *dbu-can* version; the latter appears in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. The famous extract is a well-known *pratītyasmutpāda-gāthā*, which is considered to be the epitome of Buddhist thought.

The Tibetan version given below has been reproduced from an inscription written on the south wall of the 'Du-khaṅ.[10] It reads:

> *ye dha rma he tu pra bhaba he tun te śan*
> *ta tha ga to hy ba dad te śan tsa yo*
> *ni ro dha e baṁ bhā ti ma hā śra ma ṇaḥ* ||

It will be interesting for a student of philology to note that several Sanskrit letters are not correctly transcribed into Tibetan, as is clear from the following instances: *teśan* for *teśāṁ*, *hyavadad* for *hyavadat*, *ebaṁ* for *evaṁ* and *bhāti* for *vādī*. The *pratīyasmutpāda* became a popular dictum among Buddhists for its efficacious sound rather than for its meaning.[11] The Śāradā version seems to have been transcribed from Sanskrit by an inscriber, perhaps a native of either Chamba or Kashmir.

and the Tibetan *dbu-can* script by a Tibetan. The variations in transcriptions perhaps resulted because persons speaking different languages were involved in the calligraphy.

Inscription 2

Two bold letters, written in the Śāradā script, have been noticed below a seated figure of Hayagrīva in the *skor-lam* (Pl. XLVII).

Text

ya sā

Translation

Yasā (Sanskrit Yaśa).

Commentary

I think that Yasā was the master *citrakāra* under whose supervision the decorations were carried out in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. Where was he from? Did he belong to the group of thirty-two artists brought from Kashmir by Rin-chen bzaṅ-po? It seems unlikely that the members of the first group of artists brought from Kashmir continued to work until AD 1042 at Tabo. After a gap of forty-six years, they would be quite advanced in age. The possibility of the re-engagement of the earlier group is ruled out by a comparison of mural styles accomplished in the sGo-khan and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. What seems to be certain is that Yasā belonged to a region in the north-western part of India where Śāradā was the living script, used regularly for inscribing copperplates and other official and non-official documents.[12] The characters of the Śāradā inscriptions at Tabo are much closer to the characters used in the Chamba state rather than the one used in mid-eleventh century Kashmir. The comparison of the orthography and palaeography of these inscriptions with other contemporaneous documents from Chamba and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir makes an absorbing study.

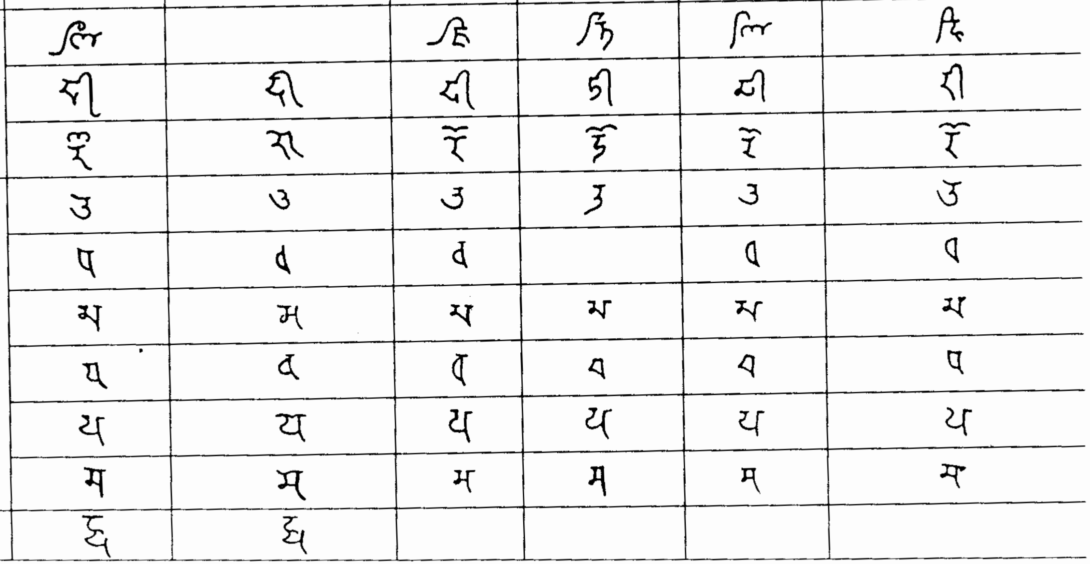
A complete set of the Śāradā letters from Tabo is not available; nevertheless, an accompanying chart tries to explain the methods for expressing the medial signs of *ā, i, ī, o*, the ligatures and some consonants (Table 10):

(i) The initial *i* and the medial *ī* are expressed by the stylish curved line on the left and the right of the consonants. Sharp angles are given at the terminating points. The *ī* sign begins

TABLE 10

Comparison between the Śaradā characters of Tabo wall inscription and those of other contemporaneous inscriptions from Sarahan, Churah (Chamba), Chitkul (Kinnaur), and Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir)

		Tabo wall inscription of *c*. AD 1040	Chitkul Buddha image inscription of the late eleventh century	Sarahan Praśasti of tenth century	Dadvar fountain inscription of AD 1041	Devi-ri-kothi inscription of AD 1159–61	Srinagar inscription of the reign of Queen Diddā, Laukika year 68, AD 992
i	VOWELS						
ī							
o							
ta	CONSONANTS						
dha							
ma							
va							
ya							
śa							
hya	LIGATURES						



at the edge of the horizontal stroke on the right (*dī*, col. I). This style is very close to the one used in the Sarahan *praśasti* (col. III)[13] and the Dadvar fountain inscription (col. IV).[14]

(ii) *O* is formed by the addition of two round curves above.[15] A similar method was used in the Sarahan *praśasti* (col. III), the Dadvar inscription (col. IV) and the Srinagar inscription (col. VI).[16]

(iii) Only two examples of the ligature formation are available: the superscribed *h* and *s* are joined by *ya* below, thus making *hya* and *sya*.

(iv) Three examples of an *anusvāra* signs are seen: *teśaṁ* for *teṣāṁ*, *evaṁ* and *ṇirodhaṁ* for *nirodhaṁ*. In each case the *anusvāra* sign consists of a single dot placed above the consonants.

(v) The formation of *ṇa* consists of two round curves joined at the centre with the addition of a small upward stroke on the right side. It differs from the *na* used in the Sarahan *praśasti*. The letter *ta* is formed by two round curves, the lower curve slightly edged out on the left side. It looks like modern small *u* of the *devanāgarī* script. Its orthography is close to the *ta* used in the Srinagar inscription (col. VI).[17] The style of *tha*'s vertical stroke on the right side is elongated and becomes a little sharper at the end as is the case with *ma*, *va* and *ya*. *Ma* generally shows a loop on the left, and the vertical stroke on the right is sharp edged. This form seems to be very common both in Chamba and Kashmir. *Ya* is bipartite. There is a tendency to carve out a greater bulge on the left. The letter *ra* is formed by a vertical stroke to which is added another stroke slightly twisting towards the right side. *Va* looks like *dha* with the difference that it bulges out on the left side. The sibilant *śa* is similar to *sa* but closed by a horizontal stoke at the top. This form resembles the *śa* used in the Dadvar inscription, the Devi-ri-kothi inscription and the Srinagar inscription.

The comparison of Tabo's Śāradā characters with related inscriptions from contiguous regions suggests that the writer of these inscriptions was an exceptionally good calligraphist. The characters preserve the features exhibited in the tenth-century Sarahan *praśasti*; however, letters *ma*, *ya* and *śa* are much closer to those used in the Dadvar inscription dated AD 1041. The letters *ro*, *ta*, *ya* and *śa* have close affinity with the

characters used in the Srinagar inscription dated AD 992. Tabo's Śāradā characters betray the features of the late eleventh and the early twelfth centuries, and can thus be safely placed somewhere between AD 1040 and 1042. This chronological sequence is fully supported by a corpus of Tibetan inscriptions preserved on the walls of the ambulatory.

THE TIBETAN INSCRIPTIONS

Apart from the Tibetan inscriptions written on the walls of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ, dKyil-khaṅ, 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ, this section also discusses some inscribed petroglyphs, located at a stone's throw from the monastic complex. Chronologically, there seems to be at least a three hundred-year gap between the rock inscriptions and those written on the walls of the sGo-khaṅ in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ; the latter represents the earliest epigraphic evidence within the monastic complex.

THE ROCK INSCRIPTIONS

Around hundred petroglyphs, just behind the PWD Rest House covering an area of 14 hectares, are important from iconographic, palaeographic and historical point of view (Fig. 19). I was fortunate in locating three boulders on which are incised inscriptions in Tibetan *dbu-can*, and a few letters, in *dbu-med* scripts. Further extensive exploration in and around Tabo, Lari and Poh might reveal other incised petroglyphs.

Text

1. rta cag (Pl. LXXIV)
2. rta cog pa[18] (Pl. LXXV)

3(a). rta cog pa
3(b). *mag gí*
rta cog

4. gral ta po. | ki
rnam [x] (Pl. LXXVI)

Translation

1. Is it possible that the inscriber forgot to use the *na-ro* sign on the letter *ca*? In three other inscriptions the word reads as *cog* instead of *cag*. From the grammatical point of view this is a perfect reading and can be translated as 'horses'.

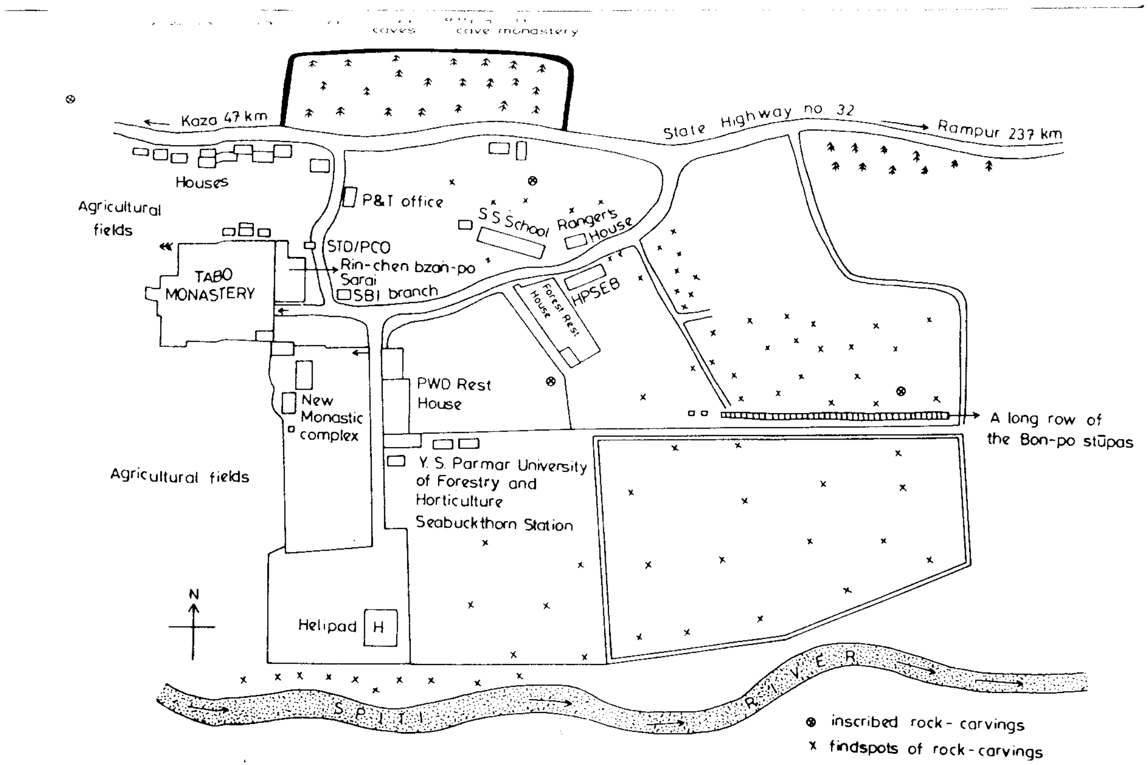
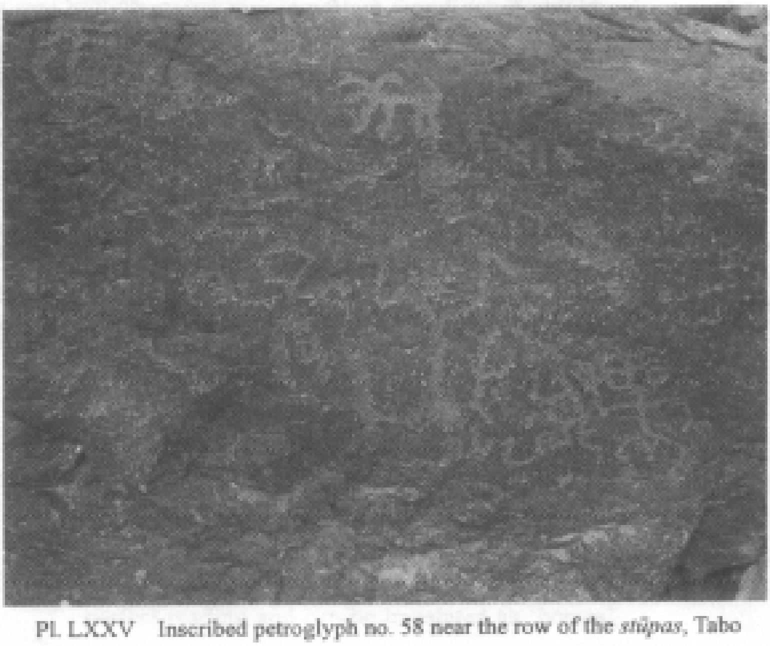


Fig. 19 Sketch map of Tabo village showing the location of inscribed rocks



Pl. LXXIV An early Tibetan inscription outside the monastic complex, Tabo



Pl. LXXV Inscribed petroglyph no. 58 near the row of the *stūpas*, Tabo



Pl. LXXVI A two-line Tibetan inscription, Tabo

2. Owner of horses.
3(a). Owner of horses.
3(b). The horses of Mag.
4. The part of Ta-po range [...].[19]

Commentary

No military or administrative term has been used in these inscriptions. The use of *tsheg* has been noticed in inscription numbers 2, 3a and 4. One example of the reversed *i* is also noticed. Equally interesting is the absence of the opening *mgo-yig* sign. The closing *śad* is used once. This is suggestive of the fact that these inscriptions are from an earlier period than those found in Ladakh and Central Asia.

The early Tibetan epigraphs at Tabo are significant for many reasons. These inscriptions are the earliest surviving Tibetan documents from the Spiti valley, clearly indicating that the Tibetanization of the region started sometimes in the eighth century AD, not during the 'second propagation of Buddhism' as generally assumed. They preserve the early orthographic characteristics which are comparable with the early inscriptions discovered by Francke in Ladakh.[20]

The formation of the Tibetan letters such as *ga*, *ma* and *ta* is of special interest. The method of putting the inversed *i* is unique as its tail comes to the middle of the preceding letter. Mag is the only name recorded in these inscriptions. Was Mag an inhabitant of Tabo engaged in horse breeding? Was he a member of the Tibetan troops which commanded several important garrisons and strategic routes in Ladakh, Baltistan, Gilgit and Spiti during the eighth century AD? Or was he a member of the invading army of Khri-sroṅ lde-btsan (AD 775–97)? The Chamba *vaṁśāvalīs* refer to the invasion of the Brahmapura kingdom by the Kīras during the reign of Lakṣmīvarman, a grandson of Meruvarman.[21] Was it possible for the Kīras of Baijnath to invade the Bharmaur kingdom sometime in the second half of the eighth century AD? The Baijnath *praśastis* make it clear that as early as the eighth century AD the line of the *rājānakas* of Kīragrāma had not emerged yet. Hermann Goetz has conjectured that the Kīras who invaded Bharmaur, and possibly destroyed the temple of Maṇi Maheśa, were people of Tibetan origin.[22] This was possible and the Tibetans could have entered Budhil valley through Lahaul.[23]

No specific information is available about Mag in the absence of data. The stationing of Tibetan troops at Tabo cannot be ruled out completely because one of the two routes used frequently by the central Tibetan troops going to Central Asian destinations passed through the Spiti valley, and the other route through Gartok and Demchok along the Indus river.

TIBETAN INSCRIPTION OF THE MONASTIC COMPLEX

Not all inscriptions translated below are historical. Many, of iconographic interest, have already been analysed in the two preceding chapters. All narrative inscriptions extracted from the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* are also excluded but their palaeographic and orthographic features have been taken into consideration so as to present a better and more comprehensive analysis. While working out the palaeographic and orthographic characteristics, an enormous number of manuscripts, numbering sixty bundles, dating between the late tenth and the seventeenth centuries, are excluded because the texts were composed by different hands. In some cases it has been observed that the writing style of one folio varies from another. Some of the texts are mere copies of the earlier versions. The chronological sequence of these texts will remain undetermined until some methodological and philological questions are resolved. But, mention will be

TABLE 11

Palaeographic features of Tibetan inscriptions in the monastic complex of Tabo

Dates	Temple		inverted *i*	*tsheg* before *śad*	*da*-drag	pleonastic use of *'a-chuṅ*	ya-btags	ornamental sign	type of *mgo-yig**	type of *śad*
			I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
AD 996–1042	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	a.	x	x	x	x	x	No	3	3
		b.	x	x	x	x	x	x	4	3
		c.	x	x	x	x	x	x	2	8
AD 1475–1500	dKyil-khaṅ		No	No	No	No	No	x?	1	1
AD 1600–1640	'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po	b.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
		c.	No	x	No	No	No	No	5	5
AD 1750	Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	b.	No	No	No	No	No	No	3	3
		c.	No	No	No	No	No	No	1	No
AD 1838–1847	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	b.	No	No	No	No	No	No	3	3
AD 1974	rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ		No	No	No	No	No	No	5	2

*For varieties of *mgo-yig* and *śad*, see Table 12.

a. = sgo-khaṅ b. = 'du-khaṅ c. = dri-gstaṅ-khaṅ

TABLE 12

Typology of *mgo-yig* (*svasti/siddhaṁ*) and punctuation signs in the inscriptions of Tabo Monastery

Signs	AD 996–1042 gTsug-lag-khaṅ			AD 1475–1500 dKyil-khaṅ	AD 1600–1640 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po	c. AD 1750 Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	AD 1838–1847 gTsug-lag-khaṅ (b)	AD 1974 rJe-bla-ma-lha-khaṅ
	a	b	c					
SVASTI/SIDDHAṀ PUNCTUATIONS	༄༎	।	༄༎ ༎	༄།	༄	༄༅	༄༅ ༎	༄
	༄༑	༄	༄། །		༄།	[illegible]	[illegible]	༄།
	༄།	༄།			༄༅༎	༄༅༎	[illegible]	༄༅
		༄༎			༄༔༎	[illegible]		༄༅ །
					༄།[illegible]			༄༅ ༎
	།	།	།	།	།	།	།	།
	༎		༎	•	།	༄	། །	༎
	༎ ༎	༎ ༎	།		།	༎	༎	
			༎།		༎			
			༎ ༎		÷			
			༎ ༎ ༎					
			༎ ༎ ༎ ༎					
			༎ ༎༎					

made of these occasionally for making comparisons with the wall inscriptions. Since these *pothīs (dpe-cha)* are portable and have been moved from one place to another by Buddhist monks across the Himalayan ranges, it is difficult to fix the actual provenance of each text.[24]

Palaeographic and Orthographic Features

Tables 11 and 12 indicate that the inscriptional material from Tabo monastery can be divided into six broad chronological periods:

(i) inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, date between AD 996 and 1042; (ii) inscriptions of the dKyil-khaṅ date roughly between AD 1475–1500; (iii) narrative inscriptions of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po probably date between AD 1600–40; (iv) three short inscriptions in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ date somewhere around AD 1740/50 (v) to this period belong three paper inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ (1838, 1847), and lastly (vi) inscriptions which are of iconographic interest in the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ can be dated to 1974.

The reversed *gi-gu*, almost in every case, has been used in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ but becomes an optional feature in the 'Du-khaṅ[25] and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ[26] (Table 11, col. I). No use of the reversed *gi-gu* is noticeable in other temples. The use of the *'a-chuṅ* is exaggerated in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ but there is a tendency to discontinue its added use in the renovation inscription of Byaṅ-chub-'od and an extract taken from the *Kṣitigarbha-sūtra*. With the exception of two instances in the sGo-khaṅ, where *dge* is wrongly written as *rge*, the *dge-sloṅ* always occurs as *dge'-sloṅ*. Inscriptions of the 'Du-khaṅ have shown its continued use as one notices *gu-ge"i* instead of *gu-ge'i*. The *zhabs-kyu* sign is fully joined with the consonants having a slight horizontal turn towards the left. In later inscriptions, this sign looks like a *mgo-yig* symbol, with a round curve below the consonants and its loop turned upwards. The *na-ro* and the *'greṅ-bu* signs are normally used to the left of the consonants such as *pa, pha, ma* and *sa*.

That the syllable *mkha'* is simply written as *ka* in the inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ and *kha* in the dKyil-khaṅ. Böehtlingk opined that *nam-ka* is borrowed from Sanskrit.[27] This has been ably refuted by Berthold Laufer.[28] *Las-stsogs* and *la-stsogs* are regularly written for *la-sogs*. In the paper inscriptions of AD 1838 and 1847 there is a general tendency to omit the prefixes such as *g, b, m*. There are several examples of wrong use of the case; often the genitive case has been used for the instrumental. This inconsistency might have arisen because spoken Tibetan in Spiti provides for the omitted final *sa*. Thus *gis* became *gi*.

The palatalization of *ma*, written with *ya-btags*, is frequently used while employing *i* and *e* vowels in the inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, but this was discontinued subsequently.[29] Among the three head letters, *r* appears as a *dbu-med* type. In the *sa-mgo* consonants, especially the subjoined *pa, ta* and *tsa* are written with horizontal ligatures on the right hand side, and *tsa* usually appears as a *dbu-med* character.

The occurrence of the *da-drag* is an essential quality of the early inscriptions of Tabo. It is regularly used as the second final after *ṅa, da, na, ra* and *la;* e.g. *sruṅs, bstand, 'odd, gyurd and gdold*. The use of the *tsheg* before *śad* is constantly noticed in the inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ but not a regular feature in the other temples. *Rin-chen* is regularly written as *rin-cen* but *rin-po-che* is written correctly. The haplography in case of the same end and the beginning consonant is observed irregularly. But there are some examples where *bzheṅsu* instead of *bzheṅs-su*, *yoṅsu* instead of *yoṅs-su* and *gzhonur* for *gzhon-nur* have been used. Not many ornamental signs appear between the lines of the inscriptions. A flower rosette appears in the middle of line 5 of the renovation inscription. Another ornamental sign is shown on a blank space to the right of the *Kṣitigarbha-sūtra*.

Interesting data is available on the *mgo-yig* and the punctuation signs. The column I(c) (Table 12) seems to be the most fascinating one where inscriptions written between AD 1040-2 provide as many as eight varieties of punctuation signs of which three have already been used in the sGo-khaṅ and the 'Du-khaṅ (see cols. I(a) and (b)). Not many varieties are used in the later inscriptions.

Numerous types of the *svasti/siddhaṁ* signs are used. Three earliest *svasti* signs are used in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ (Table 12, col. I). Two new types of the *svasti* symbols appear in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ (col. IV): one of them looks like a double interrogation sign. This type of the *siddhaṁ* normally appears in the beginning of the War-tu inscriptions. It is clear from column V that an ornamental form of *svasti* occurs in the nineteenth-century paper documents. The example *a* shows two gems above two lotuses. On the right side is a single *śad* with a running *tsheg* on it; however, *b* shows a long stroke with three lotuses and a stylish stalk over it. The last example of AD 1847 has a symbol of flame on the top followed by a double gem and two lotus strokes at the lowest level.

The comparison of the *mgo-yig* and the punctuation signs from Tabo needs to be done with the large number of documents and inscriptions recovered by Aurel Stein from the Central and Innermost Asian sites of

Endere,[30] Mazār-Tagh,[31] Khādalik,[32] Mīrān,[33] Kharakhoto[34] and Tun-huang.[35] The statistical analysis done by me shows the use of as many as twelve beginnings and five punctuation signs in the Central Asian inscriptions and the paper documents. Many signs are common. It is very likely that the earlier the document the greater the chances of varieties of beginning and the punctuation signs. The above peculiarities of Tabo inscriptions will help the scholars of Buddhism who want to establish a chronological sequence of over 35,000 folios of manuscript preserved at Tabo.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ

A. sGo-khaṅ (*mukha-maṇḍapa*)

Inscription 1

A seven-line inscription, which appears on the eastern wall of the sGo-khaṅ, is actually an extract culled from the concluding part of the *Prāti-mokṣa-sūtra*. It is written on a yellowish space measuring 18.2 cm by 15 cm. A few letters in each line are damaged by the trickling of water from the leaking roofs. The end of the line 7 is totally damaged. This seems to be the earliest inscription written in AD 996 within the monastic complex, over the north side of the entrance leading into the ’Du-khaṅ.

Text

1. | brtsam par bya zhíṅ ’byuṅ [bar bya] | [xxx][36] rgyas
2. bstan[37] la ’jug par bya. | ’dam bu’í khyí[m] na glaṅ chen bzhín.|
3. <’>chí[38] bdag de níṅgzhom bar bya | gaṅ zhíg rab tu [bag][39]
4. yod par. || chos ’dul ’dí la spyod ’gyur pa. | skye ba’*í*[40]
5. ’khor ba rab [spaṅs nas | sdug bsṅal]
6. mtha’[41] mar byed par ’gyur. || [...] sa[42]
7. so |

Translation

1-3. Arise, commence a middle course of life, turn to the religion of Buddha and subdue the army of the lord of death just as an elephant completely demolishes a house of reeds.

4-7. One who conscientiously practises this disciplinary doctrine, will put an end to all afflictions by avoiding the cycle of births. Concluded.

Commentary

The Tibetan translation of this *sūtra* was prepared by the Buddhist *ācārya* of Kashmir, named Jinamitra, with the editorial assistance of Klu'i-rgyal-mtshan of Cog-ro.[43] The work primarily contains the code of monastic laws of the Mūla-Sarvāstivāda school.

There are nine cases of the use of the reversed *i*. Two inscriber's mistakes have been noticed: *chi* for *'chi* and *de* for *sde* (l. 3). *Ta* and *da* remain undifferentiated.

Inscription 2

A four-line inscription appears on the western wall of the sGo-khaṅ below the mural of the protectress of Tabo. The black characters are written on a yellowish surface as in the previous inscription. The contents provide the name of the protectress of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The writing covers a space of 13 cm by 11 cm. Three or four letters in line 3 are completely damaged.

Text

1. | : | gtsug lag khaṅ [pa'i]
2. sruṅs ma. ||
3. Wí ñu myín [...][44]
4. bcas pa. || ||

Translation

The protectress of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, Wi-ñu-myin, [together] with her retinue.

Commentary

Though fragmentary, I have been able to identify the main figure accompanied by the eighteen female attendants depicted above the entrance. Who was Wi-ñu-myin? Was she an historical lady or a wild spirit? A reference to the four Dzalamati sisters in the biography of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po suggests that she was a local spirit of Tabo who opposed the introduction of Buddhism in lCog-la. In order to meet the challenge of the Bonpos and the local gods, Rin-chen bzaṅ-po tried to pacify the local gods and goddesses by appointing them as the guardians of the newly-founded gTsug-lag-khaṅs. Wi-ñu-myin seems to be one such local goddess of Tabo, subdued by the great translator, and subsequently appointed as the guardian of the temple.[45] Her cult became so popular that she has been painted over the doors of many temples within the complex.

Orthographically, the inscription possesses many archaic features. There are three examples of the reversed *i*, and one example of the *da-drag* (*sruṅs*). Before the vowel *i* the letter *ma* has been provided with a subjoined *ya*. The type of *mgo-yig* symbol used here is followed consistently on the south and the north walls.

Historical Inscriptions (nos 3-32) on the South Wall*

Five rows of murals of historical personages, each identifiable with the help of Tibetan inscriptions inscribed below, occupy a space of about 1.8 m in length (whereas the total length of the wall at the base of the panel is 2.52 m), and 1.20 m in height. The height of the lowermost row from the ground level is 1.58 m. I think that a 72 cm blank space on the left side was once adorned with similar murals. The surviving miniature figures on the walls indicate that each row had many figures arranged horizontally from left to right. Unfortunately, many murals and inscriptions have perished beyond recognition. The surviving names are extremely important historically as they give us the composition of the ecclesiastical group closely associated with the foundation of gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

Row I

1. | : | lha [xxxx][46] nā ga rā dza. |
2. | : | bla [xxxx][47] ye śes 'od. |
3. | : | lha btsun pa de ba rā dza. |
4. | : | sñel 'or rge[48] sloṅ grags pa bśes gñen. |
5. | : | graṅ la rge[49] sloṅ rad na gur ba. |
6. | : | rtugs 'or dge' sloṅ dbyíg gí bsod nams. |
7. | : | sñel 'or dge' sloṅ 'dul ba byaṅ chub. |
8. | : | ñí ma dge' sloṅ ríg pa 'byuṅ gnas. |
9. | : | mo lo dge' sloṅ śes rab sñíṅ po. |
10. | : | mag pí tsa dge' sloṅ mes pa śes rab. |

Row II

1–4. destroyed

5. | : [±2] 'dí rnams 'khor ba. |
6. | : | sñel ver dge' sloṅ drí [±3]. |
7. | : | rhrugs ver dge' sloṅ dge' ba skyoṅ. |

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*Inscriptions numbered consecutively for the sake of convenience, however, this number is not used for the textual analysis.

8. | : | maṅ ver dge' sloṅ bsod nams rín cen. |
9. | : | [x]m toṅ dge' sloṅ lha'í gyuṅ gruṅ. |
10. | : | maṅ ver dge' sloṅ rín cen brtson grus. |
11. | : | rum dge' sloṅ dran ba śes rab. |
12. | : | ma ga pí tsa dge' sloṅ yon tan go cha. |

Row III

1. | : | [±3] dge' sloṅ byaṅ chub [xx]

2–4. destroyed

5. | : | mag pí tsha slob dpon(?) yon [...]
6. | : | su druṅ yar dge' sloṅ 'dul ba bsod nams. |
7. destroyed
8. | : | bod dge' sloṅ tshul khríms dblo' gros. |[50]
9. | : | nam bu śud dge' sloṅ dar pa brtson grus. |[51]
10. | : | mag pí tsa dge' sloṅ 'dul ba yon tan. |

11–12. destroyed

Row IV

1–6. destroyed

7. | : | sñes ther dge' sloṅ tshul[52] [±3] [x]d po. |

8–11. destroyed

12. m [xx] kyas 'grug dpal. |

Row V

1–9. totally destroyed

10. mag pí tsa dbaṅ phyug rten. |
11. mag pí tsa guṅ sum. |
12. zhugs dge' sloṅ śes rab. |

Translation

Row I

1. *lha* [...] Nā-ga-rā-dza.
2. *bla* [...] Ye-śes-'od.
3. *lha btsun-pa* De-ba-rā-dza.
4. *bhikṣu* Grags-pa bśes gñen of sÑel-'or.
5. *bhikṣu* Rad-na gur-pa of Graṅ-la.
6. *bhikṣu* dByig bsod-nams of rTugs-'or.
7. *bhikṣu* 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub of sÑel-'or.

8. *bhikṣu* Rig-pa 'byuṅ gnas of Ñi-ma.
9. *bhikṣu* Śes-rab sñiṅ-po of Mo-lo.
10. *bhikṣu* Mes-pa śes-rab of Mag-pi-tsa.

Row II

1 to 4. destroyed
5. 'Di rnams 'khor-ba of [...].
6. *bhikṣu* Dri [...] of sÑel-ver.
7. *bhikṣu* dGe'-ba skyoṅ of rHrugs-ver.
8. *bhikṣu* bSod-nams rin-cen of Maṅ-ver.
9. *bhikṣu* lHa'i gyuṅ-gruṅ of [...]m-toṅ.
10. *bhikṣu* Rin-cen brtson-'grus of Maṅ-ver.
11. *bhikṣu* Dran-ba śes-rab of Rum.
12. *bhikṣu* Yon-tan go-cha of Mag-pi-tsa.

Row III

1. *bhikṣu* Byaṅ-chub [...] of [...].
2–4. destroyed.
5. an *ācārya* (?) Yon [...] of Mag-pi-tsha.
6. *bhikṣu* 'Dul-ba bsod-nams of Su-druṅ-yar.
7. destroyed.
8. *bhikṣu* Tshul-khrims blo'-gros of Tibet.
9. Dar-pa brtson- 'grus of Nam-bu-śud.
10. *bhikṣu* 'Dul-ba yon-tan of Mag-pi-tsa.
11–12 damaged.

Row IV

1–6. destroyed.
7. *śramaṇera* Tshul [...] po of sÑes-ther.
8–11. destroyed.
12. 'Grug-dpal of M[...] kyas.

Row V

1–9. damaged
10. dBaṅ-phyug-rten of Mag-pi-tsa.
11. Guṅ-sum of Mag-pi-tsa.
12. *bhikṣu* Śes-rab of Zhugs.

Historical Inscriptions (nos 33-51) on the North Wall

Out of the five rows of murals on the north wall only three survive. The

murals and the accompanying inscriptions roughly occupy a space of 98 cm in length and 76 cm in height. There are clear traces of totally destroyed murals in the blank space of 1.58 m on the right side. The use of the *mgo-yig* sign is not clear. Some of the persons (*no dge-sloṅ*) mentioned here hailed from the same localities recorded on the south wall.

Row I

1. [...] lha sras [...] |
2. lha sras 'jíg sten mgon. |
3. | : | lha lcams 'od 'phro. |
4. lha sras brten pa [ca]n. |
5. lha sras [...] |

6–9 destroyed

Row II

1. sñel 'or bo dí sa tva. |
2. stag lo tshul khríms. |
3. gza ma byaṅ chub can. |
4. sna bo chos kyí sñíṅ po. |
5. [...] byaṅ chub [±2] |
6. sñel 'or byuṅ tshul. |

7–9 destroyed

Row III

1. tse de [...] rgyal. |
2. skye śna dge bsñen tshul khríms legs pa. |
3. sñel ver khrí mchog. |
4. sñel 'or guṅ tshe skyoṅ. |
5. [...] chad
6. sñel 'or skyes mchog. |
7. sñel 'or [...] |

8–9 destroyed.

Translation

Row I

1. *lha-sras* [...]
2. *lha-sras* 'Jig-rten-mgon
3. *lha-lcams* 'Od-'phro

4. *lha-sras* brTen-pa-can (?)
5. *lha sras* [...]

6–9 destroyed

Row II

1. Bodhisattva of sÑel-'or
2. Tshul khrims of sTag-lo
3. Byaṅ-chub-can of gZa-ma[53]
4. Chos-kyi sñiṅ-po of sNa-bo[54]
5. Byaṅ-chub [...] of [...]
6. Byuṅ-tshul of sÑel-'or

7–9 destroyed

Row III

1. [...] rgyal of Tse-de
2. an *upāsaka* Tshul-khrims legs-pa of sKye-śna.[55]
3. Khri-mchog of sÑel-ver
4. Guṅ-mchog of sÑel-ver
5. Guṅ-tshe-skyoṅ of sÑel-'or
6. Chad [...]
7. sKyes-mchog of sÑel-'or
8. [...] of sÑel-'or

9–10 destroyed.

Commentary

Interesting information is provided by these inscriptions. Twenty-nine persons belonging to sixteen localities are mentioned on the south wall, whereas the names of only fifteen persons and six localities are known from the north wall. Two localities, sÑel-'or and Mag-pi-tsa are referred to seven and six times respectively. The exact location of both places is uncertain, but it seems fair to assume that these were large villages able to spare numerous male members for the monastic establishment.

Apart from making available to us the names of twenty-one villages/places/regions, the inscriptions also reveal the names of the patrons of the artists and the Buddhist monks. Sixteen persons are not given any epithet, but they can be classified into six social categories: (i) patrons; (ii) monks; (iii) *śramaṇera*; (iv) *upāsaka*; (v) *ācārya*, and (vi) ordinary people.

Among the patrons, *mahāguru* Ye-śes-'od and his two sons, *lha-btsun-pas* Nā-ga-rā-dza[56] and De-ba-rā-dza played significant roles in the *bstan-*

pa phyi-dar. The title of Yes-śes-'od is clearly distinguished from those of his sons. Three princes of Gu-ge appear in red monastic robes (*chos-gos)* showing their ordained status. The title *lha-sras* has been used for four persons on the north wall. Did all these persons belong to the royal houses of Gu-ge and Purang? Their names do not occur in the royal genealogies. It seems quite possible that they might represent the local aristocratic families of Spiti, Lahaul and Kinnaur. The princess 'Od-'phro seems to be the wife of the prince 'Jig-rten-mgon.

From amongst the twenty names of the Buddhist monks belonging to numerous localities of the western Himalaya, the most outstanding role seems to have been played by *bhikṣu* 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub (Vinayabodhi) of sÑel-'or for he is also mentioned in the inscriptions of the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ with the superior title, *gnas-brtan chen-po (mahā-sthavira)*. It is very likely that many monks assisted the painters and the sculptors in different capacities to accomplish the decorations in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The younger *bhikṣus* are called *dge'-tshul* and *dge-bsñen*. The hierarchy of the Buddhist monks shown in the inscriptions is suggestive of the fact that it did not evolve at Tabo and many of them might have come here from the localities mentioned along with their names.

The reversed *gi-gu* has been used seventeen times on the south wall and seven times on the north wall. With the exception of one example on the north wall, *dge* always is written with the final *'a-chuṅ*. There are two instances at least where its use was required but was omitted (SW, row II, 10 and row III, 9) where *'grus* appears as *grus*. There is one such example where the prefix *d* has been used indiscriminately. In row III, 5 (south wall) the *ma* is provided with a subjoined *ga*, and only once the *tsa* is written as *tsha*. *Rin-chen* is regularly written as *rin-cen* (SW, row II, 8, 10).

B. 'Du-khaṅ (*maṇḍapa*)

Historical Inscriptions (nos 52–8) on the East Wall

Several early murals of a historical nature have been painted over in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. A few of these escaped the painters' brushes (just beneath the clay statue of Vajrāveśa in the 'Du-khaṅ). A similar panel of historical personages has survived just outside the *prabhāmaṇḍala* of Vajrāveśa. Unfortunately, in the absence of any inscriptional label the persons depicted in the row remain

unidentified. All persons referred to in the inscriptions were associated with the renovations carried out by Byaṅ-chub-'od.

Text

1. gnas brtan chen po 'dul ba byaṅ chub sñel 'or.
2. chos sga'i slob chen po gu na ba na ti 'or. |
3. lcog la'i sde dge sloṅ mos pa bsod nams bums. |
4. [xx]'[57]i sde sman pa ba thon [xx] rin cen yaṅ 'or ('od). |
5. gu ge''i sde [...]
6. lha btsun pa [xx] ra [x]
7. [xx] sde nas. ||

Translation

1. The *mahā-sthavira* (*arhat*) 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub (Vinayabodhi) of sÑel-'or.[58]
2. The *mahā-ācārya* (great teacher) Gu-na-ba-na-ti-'or of Chos-sga.
3. A *bhikṣu* (monk) Mos-pa bSod-nams-bums, the district (or province) of lCog-la.
4. The doctor Ba-thon [...] Rin-cen yaṅ-'or of Gu-ge (?) province.
5. [...], the province of Gu-ge.
6. *deva-bhadanta* (the noble) [. . .] ra [...]
7. No satisfactory translation can be made in this case.

Commentary

The writing style and the use of punctuation show that all inscriptions written on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ belong to a period of restorations completed in AD 1042. 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub of sÑel-'or, who finds mention in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ, is now referred to as *gnas-brtan chen-po (mahā-sthavira)* instead of a *dge'-sloṅ* (monk). A new social category of doctors (*sman-pa)* appear for the first time. I am not able to locate Chos-sga, but lCog-la can be identified with the Spiti region, which has also been mentioned in an inscription from Lhalung. lCog-la here included a large extract of Spiti extending from the Lingti river in the west to the Gyu rivulet in the east. Today its use is confined to the conglomeration of three villages of Poh, Tabo and Lari.[59]

Inscriptions numbers 5 to 7 belong to a separate panel. Inscription 6 preserves the title *lha-btsun-pa* normally assumed by members of the royal family of Gu-ge and Purang. After two or three totally damaged letters one can easily read *ra* but the next letter is damaged. Could this

be the name of either Nā-ga-rā-dza or De-ba-rā-dza? Soon after Ye-śes-'od's death, one of his sons along with Byaṅ-chub-'od, seems to have been very closely associated with the massive renovations undertaken in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

Orthographically, the inscriptions are closely associated with those historical inscriptions written on the eastern wall of the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ discussed below. Not a single example of the reversed *i* is noticed. The exaggerated use of *'a-chuṅ* is minimal but not abandoned completely. No *mgo-yig* symbol has been used but the *tsheg* appears regularly before *śad*. *Rin-cen* for *rin-chen* remains unchanged, as noticed earlier in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ.

C. Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (*garbhagrha*)

Three Narrative Inscriptions (nos 59–61) on the Eastern Wall of the Circumambulation

These three inscriptions are written on the uppermost section of the eastern wall of the *pradakṣiṇāpatha*. If the orthography and the punctuation styles are any indication the inscriptions under discussion can safely be associated with those inscriptions which help us to identify the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas painted in the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. Inscription number 3 is an abbreviated extract taken from the title page of the *Ārya-bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra* (Pl. XLVI).[60]

Text

1. 'phags pa rab 'byord. || || || ||
2. byaṅ chub sems dpa' mchog
   tu dga' ba'i rgyal pos. | bcom
   ldan, das la zhug<s> ||
3. || bcom ldan, 'das śag kya thub
   pa mñan yod na bzhugs te. || dge
   sloṅ 'bum daṅ byaṅ chub sems dpa'
   bye ba phrag brgyad bcu daṅ thabs gcig. ||

Translation

1. Ārya Subhūti
2. The Bodhisattva, Pramodyarāja approached Tathāgata.
3. The Tathāgata Śākyamuni sojourned in Śrāvasti, together with one lakh *bhikṣus* (monks), and eighty *koṭi* (crore) Bodhisattvas.

Commentary

As pointed out earlier, all of them are extracts from the Mahāyāna work, *Ārya-bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra*. They explain the murals painted on the topmost part of the eastern wall. A kneeling figure below the inscription numbers 1 and 2 possibly represents either Ārya Subhūti or Pramodyarāja. Inscription number 2 is separated from number 1 by a red vertical line. In *'byord,* there is an example of the *da-drag*. The *ñis-śad* is repeated four times. Similar examples are noted on the walls of the *pradakṣiṇā-patha*. The inscriber has omitted the use of *sa* at the end of inscription number 2. Since these inscriptions explain the murals which are based on the first and the second pages of the *Ārya-bhadra-kalpikā-sūtra*, the murals following them show the series of the Thousand Buddhas.

The use of the *tsheg* before *śad* is used in all cases. We encounter three types of *śads,* and one type of *svasti*. The *svasti* sign is similar to the one used in the beginning of the renovation inscription with the difference that the latter has a double *śad* with a blank space in between. Now, two dots between the vertical strokes, have disappeared. No use of the *'a-chuṅ* is seen as the *dge* appears without the final *'a*. The mural style and the orthography of inscriptions indicate that they pre-date the inscriptions on the eastern walls of the sanctum (translated below).

Historical Inscriptions (nos 62–3) on the Eastern Wall of the Sanctum

A number of persons, associated directly or indirectly in numerous capacities with the renovations carried out in the gTsug-lag-khaṅ are painted in the panels on the right and the left walls of the sanctum. Five persons and their inscriptional labels on the right wall, recorded earlier by Tucci, are now totally defaced.[61]

Text

1. gzhi' mal la dbaṅ phyug
   mkhar rum gu ge'i sde.
2. gnas brtan chen po, 'dul ba byaṅ chub [xxxx]
   ta po yi dge 'dun sde chen po.

Translation

1. gZhi'-mal-la, the mighty, from the castle Rum in the province of Gu-ge.[62]
2. The *mahā-sthavira (arhat)* 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub (of sÑel-'or) and the great assemblage of Ta-po (Tabo) monks.[63]

Commentary

The mighty gZhi'-mal-la seems to be in command of the Rum fort in Gu-ge. He might have embraced Buddhism as he is also shown in a monastic robe like Byaṅ-chub-'od. An *arhat* 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub is the same person whose name occurs both on the walls of the sGo-khaṅ and the 'Du-khaṅ. It is quite clear that he headed the Buddhist community at Tabo in AD 1042. The names of five personages on the right hand side indicate that they belonged to four different localities, including Mag-pi-tsa and Rum already discussed above. gÑen-tiṅ of Rum might have contributed substantially by providing financial help for such massive repairs. The orthography of these inscriptions is very similar to those written on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ, and can be safely dated to the same period, i.e. AD 1042.

The Renovation Inscription of Byaṅ-chub-'od (no. 64)

This seems to be the most important inscription in the sanctum both from the historical and the grammatical point of view. It is written immediately below a panel of murals (measuring 1.08 m by 42.5 cm) depicted on the eastern wall of the *garbhagr̥ha*. A twelve-line inscription roughly covers a space of 1.04 m by 18 cm and the size of the letters varies from .7 cm to 1.5 cm. The Tibetan text, along with its translation, has been produced fully by Tucci but he has omitted the beginning and the end portions of several lines. A 12 cm portion at the end of the line 12 is totally illegible. The text given below was prepared *in situ* and finally rechecked in November 1995 and June 1997 (Pl. LIV).

Text

1. | | | | spre'u'i lo la sṅon mes byaṅ chub sems dpas. | gtsug lag khaṅ 'di bzheṅs nas. | lo bzhi bcu rtsa drug gi 'og tu dbon lha btsun pa byaṅ chub 'od kyis byaṅ chub kyi nas thugs sṅon tu 'gro bas. | gtsug lag khaṅ 'di gso' ba mdzad de. | de'i bka' rin po ches bskul ba sṅon tu 'gro bas bdag cag sug [±7][64]
2. [±3] des na dri gtsaṅ khaṅ gi ri mo zind pa la. | dge sloṅ śes kha rgyu. | bdag lo rgyus daṅ bsṅo ba byed par 'dod bskyes ti brdzod pa ni. | gaṅ zhig thag riṅ lam gyis dub 'gyur[65] zhiṅ. | grogs daṅ mdza' bo dag gis rnam spaṅs pa'i. | skye bo ñon moṅ[66] ltad mo ba rnams la. | gtsug lag khaṅ mdzes 'di ni bzheṅs so. | lo rgyus cuṅ zhig

3. [±3][67] gis mñanda<pa> la[x] || lha'i rigs 'khruṅs
byaṅ chub sems dpa' gi.[68]|| myi rje lhas mdzad mgo' nag yoṅs
ki mgon. | lhan cig skyes pa'i mkhyen rab phul byuṅ bas. ||
ma ríg mun pa ye śes 'od mdzad des. || 'khor bar 'byord bar
gyurd pa'i rgyal srid la. || sgyu ma lta bur gzigs pa sṅon 'gro
bas. || me tog 'phreṅ rñis bzhin du spaṅs nas ni. |
4. de thams cad chos phyir dbul mdzad de. ||
mṅa' ris g[xxx] rnams dkar por 'oṅs gyurd nas. ||
dpal ldan bkra' śís bde gnas gtsug lag khaṅ. ||
rgyal 'khams 'dí'i sgron mar 'dir bzheṅs so. || |
skyes mchog de'i rigs gyur dbon ñid ni. ||
gaṅ zhig bslab pa gsum daṅ yaṅ dag ldan ||
śes rab ljon śiṅ dad pa'i rtsa ba zug. || sde snod
5. [gsum gyi] mye tog 'bras bu rgyas. ||
rje rnam lha btsun byaṅ chub 'od de yi. ||
mes kyis[69] mdzad rñiṅs par gzigs nas ni. ||
mkhan bzo 'dus[70] stsogs te rgyu sbyar nas. ||
khal pa'i bka'í yis[71] bdag cag bskos nas ni. ||
legs par byi dor byas nas bcos pa yin. ||
|| de ltar dge ba'i sems mdzad sṅon 'gro ba. ||
bdag cag rnams kyis 'di b<zhin>[...][72]
6. de dus mṅa'[73] bdag bla ma'i 'od. ||
[...] kund ltar dkar lags pa'í. |
bsod nams de yis yon bdag dam pa ní. |
chos rgyal rje btsun byaṅ chub 'od las stsogs. ||
'gro ba kund kyis skye ba thams cad du. ||
gdul bya ma lus 'dund par nus pa'i. ||
gzugs mchog mtshaṅ bzaṅs du mas rnam spras ti. ||
[skye ba kun byaṅ chub][74] spyod spyad ciṅ. ||
rim gyis byaṅ chub
7. [dam par skyod par śar.][75] || gaṅ dag gi [...] na des
[...][76] bdag gis sras bcas 'gro ba'i mgon de yi. ||
sku gzugs maṅ po bris ba 'dí dag dun. ||
[±2] pa'm rig pa'í ltad mo pa rnams kyaṅ. ||
bskald pa bzaṅ po'í bde gśegs sras bcas kyí. ||
mṅon sum zhal mthoṅ gsuṅ [mchog thos nas ni. ||
'jig rten][77] thams cad [...]
8. [...][78] tshol[79] bcas pa. | sñom par byed pa'i [...]
dbon [...]. || de ltar dge ba gaṅ rnams gzhan la
bsṅos pa yis.[80] || bsod nams rgya che nam mkha'í

gtoṅ[81] gñam[82] gaṅ byuṅ des. || bdag cag grogs bcas
las su gtogs pa'i 'khor kun dag. || thog ma myed
nas dṅos zhen rnam rtog 'khruld pa yis. || [ṅa rgyal]
dregs pa'i stsag[83] dgra tho' bas tsams[84]

9. [pa rnams]. || [...] gzugs [x]sa steṅ[...] ba. ||
[...] 'dod chags zhe sdaṅ ka gdug[85] brtan par btsugs pa'i. ||
de 'dra'i khyim ni srid gsum[86] 'khor ba'i myiṅ ldan nas. ||
ye śes bśan[87] mṅa' thugs rje chen po'i phyag riṅ bas. ||
bdag cag myur ba myur bar draṅ[88] pa[89] mdzad nas ni. ||
khyed kyis [±4][90] don sems khaṅ khyim mchog [...]

10. [...][91] di[xxx] mkhan gyis bar [...] || bsam stan[92]
zas daṅ gos daṅ btuṅ bas 'ṅoms pa daṅ. | pha
rold phyin dug[93] grogs daṅ rtag tu phrad par śog. ||
der ni ci dgar[94] 'khor ba'i ñoṅ moṅs[95] bran 'khol zhiṅ. ||
rnam thar rdziṅ la [tiṅ ṅe 'dzind kyi chus bkaṅ ste. ||][96]
[...][97] par ma skyes pas kun nas

11. [...] dag [xx] <'>thas ma [...] tu[...]. || [...][98]ní. ||
'dzem[99] daṅ khrel yod gos kyi mchog 'gos te.[100] ||
mtshan daṅ dpe byad bzaṅ pos legs rgyand cíṅ.[101] ||
bla myed theg chen mṅon śes bzhon pa la. ||
byaṅ chub sems kyí kha lo. pa yi ni ||[102]yan lag brgya daṅ

12. [...][103] || mya ṅan 'di ['byín] dbye[xx] dgon khaṅ du.[104] ||
byaṅ chub sems 'khod[105] rgyal mtshan bsgreṅ bar śog. ||
[...]. ||[106]

Translation

1. Previously, in the monkey year, this *vihāra* (monastery) was constructed by the ancestor (*pitāmaha*), the Bodhisattva (i.e. Ye-śes-od);[107] forty-six years later, his grandnephew *lha-btsun-pa (deva-bhadanta)* Byaṅ-chub-'od,[108] motivated by the thought of enlightenment, repaired this gTsug-lag-khaṅ.[109] The motivation of his precious advice being our guide, we have been awakened [...].
2. [...] after the completion of the paintings of the *garbhagṛha* (sanctum),[110] the *bhikṣu* (monk) Śes-kha-rgyu-bdag felt the desire to make its narration and dedication,[111] and has said:

   For those who are fatigued from long journey and for all the beings, spectators of misfortune who have been abandoned by friends and relatives, this pulchritudinous monastery has been constructed.

3. Listen to [...] ephemeral narration[112] [...]. Born in a divine lineage, the Bodhisattva, the supreme ruler of men and lord of the black-headed people; for the continuous growth of his perfect wisdom (and) for (dispelling) the darkness of ignorance (came) Ye-śes-'od (Jñāna-prabha). The kingdom is adhered to[113] (subject to) the cyclic existence (i.e. births and deaths), having thought it (i.e. kingdom) as an illusion (*māyā*), he (Ye-śes-'od) abandoned it like a garland of faded flowers.
4. That he offered all those things (which he possessed, i.e. kingdom) for the sake of the Law (dharma). When three[114] mṄa'-ris turned white (i.e. the people of the three mṄa'-ris became wise by their virtuous behaviour), he (Ye-śes-'od) established this splendid and auspicious monastery as a lantern for this kingdom.[115] Of this excellent lineage, the very grandnephew, possessing the triple spiritual education[116] planted the roots of devotion similar to the tree of wisdom that
5. has abundant and luxuriant fruits of the flowers of the Tripiṭakas. The noble master, Byaṅ-chub-'od, having seen that the (monastery) made by his ancestor has become old (thus) called together artisans (*śilpis*)[117] and distributed gifts (amongst them); for (Byaṅ-chub-'od's) potent order, we after having sufficiently purified ourselves, started improvements[118]; being motivated by a virtuous thought (of Byaṅ-chub-'od), this work was [cherished][119] by all of us.
6. Thereafter the lord Bla-ma-'od [...];[120] the excellent patron's merits were like a pure white lotus flower. The noble *(rje-btsun)* Byaṅ-chub-'od governed according to Law, (and) was capable of converting all the aspiring living beings in all the births. Having practised in all the forms of existence, the course of life (*ācāra*), gradually leading to an excellent enlightenment; the beautiful body was bedecked with many auspicious marks (*lakṣaṇas*).[121]
7. [...] the protector of the world (Sugata) together with his sons [...]; (who fashioned) many statues and these pictures,[122] all the dexterous [artists][123] (were) gifted with sight and knowledge. After having had the three-fold patronage and listened to the highest teaching of the Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa (Good Age) together with their sons, all the worlds [...]
8. to make search together with [...]. For the transfer on others all such virtues like that of a *sārthavāha*[124] (head of the caravan)

(whose) deeds are impartial [...]; and for all the copious merits are like the expanses of the sky; we with all our friends belong to the *saṁsāra* and engaged in *karma* since time immemorial because of the mistaken confutations (unreal conclusions), and have covetousness for things (considering them) as being real (which are not real). Pride and arrogance are (our) collected[125] enemies[126] [...] of our mischievous behaviour[127] [...].

9. [...] from above [...]; (we live) in an extended house named the circle of three existence (three *saṁsāra*) [...] and firmly planted the pillars of vicious passions[128] and anger. By the hand of the great merciful lord of that eye (i.e. wisdom's eye), and speedily guiding us in doctrinal teaching (?), [...] the excellent house of the highest thought (the supreme end).
10. [...] from that incense [...], the contentment given by food, garments and drinks is like that of meditation, may we always be with the friendship of the Six *Prajñāpāramitās* (six perfections). In this dramatic play of the transitory world, the troubles enslave oneself (like) a servant; and the pool of liberation having filled with the water of meditation, [...] from all the births [...],
11. [...] wearing the finest clothes of shame(?) and modesty and, well adorned with the beautiful principal and secondary characteristic marks. The great chariot (the Mahāyāna) of supernatural perception,[129] is the superior vehicle of all. Of that vehicle, the thought of wisdom (i.e. enlightenment) [...] is the eightfold path and [...]
12. [...] to remove troubles and disparities (?) [...] in this monastery the Bodhisattvas have been placed who hold up the banner of the victory of Buddhism.[...]

Commentary

I have earlier commented upon the palaeographic and orthographic characteristics of the inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ but some special peculiarities of the renovation inscription may be taken up for further elaboration. The *da-drag* is used in the following cases: *zind* (l. 2); *mñand*, *'byord* and *gyurd* (l. 3, the last word also in l. 4); *kund* (twice), *bzaṅs* and *'dund* (l. 6); *bskald* (l. 7); *'khruld* (l. 8); *pha-rold* and *'dzind* (l. 10), and *rgyand* (l. 11). There are four examples of the palatalization of *ma*, written with *ya-btags*: *mye-tog* (l. 5), *myed-pa* (l. 8) *myed nas* (l. 8) and *myiṅ* (l. 9). Fourteen examples of the reversed *gi-gu* are noticed.

Tucci has rightly observed that the inscription has two parts, as also specified by the writer himself: historical and dedicatory. Each section can be further sub-divided into well defined themes. The first six lines narrate the history of two patrons, namely Ye-śes-'od and Byaṅ-chub-'od (the builder and the renovator). Line 3 supports the later biographical and historical accounts of the Tibetan chroniclers that Ye-śes-'od abdicated his throne and became a monk. But the inscription is silent about the circumstances leading to his death. In beautiful verse the impact of the second diffusion of Buddhism is expressed in line 4: *mṅa' ris gsum rnams dkar por 'oṅs gyurd nas*. Tucci is correct in saying that the name of the monastery was *dpal-ldan bkra'-śis bde-gnas*. An altered version of the same appears on the paper inscription (dated 1838) as *bkra-śis bde-gnas-su*. The meaning of line 6 of the first verse remains unclear. Tucci has suggested that *myaṅ* (we have read it as *mṅa'*) is an abbreviation of *mya-ṅan*, but the following word is *bdag*. Could this be the inscriber's error? Its interpretation depends on the translation of the last three syllables: *bla-ma'i-'od*. Which patron was intended by the writer: Ye-śes-'od or Byaṅ-chub-'od?

Line 7 is in praise of the artists and they are compared with ascetics, gifted with sight and knowledge of their craft. We differ substantially from Tucci in the translation (Indo-Tibetica, III.1, pp. 202–3) of the end of the line 8. Especially the line 11 explains the importance of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) as superior to all other *yānas* (vehicles). The use of the *mṅon-śes* has a double meaning: one, it explains how Mahāyāna is endowed with supernatural perception; two, *mṅon-par śes-pa drug daṅ ldan-pa* is also an epithet of the Buddha.

We think that there is no reference to Māra in the last line as supposed by Tucci, but the inscription ends with a happy note that the miseries and distinctions of all kinds may be removed with the hoisting of the flag of the victory of Buddhism.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE DKYIL-KHAṄ

On the north and the south walls of the dKyil-khaṅ are painted several panels of historical and non-historical themes of which many can be identified with the help of inscriptions.

Panel I on the North Wall (nos 65-84)

This panel is of singular importance for the student of Himalayan architecture in general and Tabo monastic complex in particular. Apart

from supplying the names of persons who were actively involved in the construction of the dKyil-khaṅ, the inscriptions provide the names of the temples *(lha-khaṅs)* which were in existence at Tabo when the panel under discussion was completed.

Text

1. | tho gliṅ gser khaṅ gi dkod[130] pa
2. ta po rgyan gyi gtsug lag khaṅ gi 'kod[131] pa
3. 'groṅ[132] ston lha khaṅ
4. gser khaṅ
5. byams khaṅ
6. dkar chuṅ[133]
7. chuṅ ba blo ldan dbaṅ po
8. dkon (?) tshogs khaṅ [134]
9. chos <g>ñer pa
10. | byaṅ sems nam kha 'od[135]
11. gnas stan chen po chos 'phags. |
12. rgyal po bsod nams lde. |
13. jo bo lha ma 'dzes
14. blon po rin rgyam |
15. blon po graṅ[136] dkar dpon btsun
16. [...][137]
17. pa na ḍi rta gaṅ lo la na mo
18. byaṅ sems nam kha[138] 'od la na mo
19. druṅ chen blo ldan dban po la na mo
20. [...][139] kyi rgyal po 'gro ba rnams kyi
    gtsug gi rgyan du gyu [...] kyi rje lha
    dbaṅ tshan *can* [la na mo]

Translation

1. The plan of the gSer-khaṅ of Tho-gliṅ.
2. The plan of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, the head ornament of Ta po (Tabo).
3. 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ.
4. gSer-khaṅ (the Golden temple)
5. Byams-khaṅ (Maitreya temple).
6. dKar-chuṅ.
7. Blo-ldan dbaṅ-po, the junior
8. dKon (?) tshogs khaṅ (?).
9. Chos gñer-pa (the custodian of religion).

10. Byaṅ-sems nam-kha-'od.
11. *Mahā-sthavira* (the great arhat) Chos-'phags (Ārya-dharma).
12. The king, bSod-nams-lde.[140]
13. The venerable lHa-ma- 'dzes.
14. The minister Rin-rgyam.
15. The minister dPon-btsun of Graṅ-dkar (Dankhar).
16*. Illegible.
17. Salutation to the *paṇḍita* Gaṅ-lo.
18. Salutation to Byaṅ-sems nam-kha-'od.
19. Salutation to *druṅ-chen* Blo-ldan dbaṅ-po
20. [Salutations to the venerable lord], the supreme master of all living beings, the noble Lha-dbaṅ.

* Inscriptions 16–20 are inscribed outside the panel.

Commentary

Apart from giving us the names of six temples, existing within the complex at Tabo, another mural and the inscription below it refers to the gSer-khaṅ of Tholing. Like the names of personages of distinct social categories mentioned earlier in the inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ, we come across the king bSod-nams-lde (Puṇyamalla), ministers Rin-rgyam and dPon-btsun (of Dankhar), and *mahā-sthavira* Chos-'phags (Āryadharma). Byaṅ-sems nam-mkha'-'od (inscription number 10) seems to be the same person referred to again in inscription 18. Inscriptions 16 to 19 are not part of this panel, and number 20 belongs to a mural painted a little above the four seated persons. *Druṅ-chen* Blo-ldan dbaṅ-po seems to be an elder brother of *chuṅ-ba* (the junior) Blo-ldan dbaṅ-po (inscription 7). The epithet *paṇḍita*, the Tibetan equivalent of *slob-dpon* is used quite frequently in the earlier inscriptions of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ.

There are not many spelling mistakes. We have noticed the use of *d* and *'a-chuṅ* for *b:* e.g. *dkod-pa* and *'kod-pa* for *bkod-pa*. *Nam-ka* of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ now appears as *nam-kha* instead of *nam-mkha'*. To pronounce *ka* as *kha* is typical of the Tibetan spoken in Spiti. The use of the prefix *g* is omitted in inscription number 9. *'Groṅ* is an inscriber's error for *'brom* (inscription 3). Inscription 20 refers to *rje-btsun (bhaṭṭāraka)* Lha-dbaṅ blo-gros who died in AD 1462.

Was therefore Lha-dbaṅ alive when dKyil-khaṅ was decorated? The inscriptional evidence on this question is silent. Considering the evolutionary sequence of numerous temples in the complex it seems likely that Lha-dbaṅ's mural was painted soon after his death along with the

mural of Tsoṅ-kha-pa, the founder of the dGe-lugs-pa sect, sometimes between AD 1463–1500.

Panel II on the South Wall (nos 85–7)

Three princes of Gu-ge are painted on the eastern corner of the south wall. The much larger inscription, consisting of 8 lines, once existed below this panel. As pointed out earlier in chapter V the princes can be identified with the help of inscriptions as given below.

Text

1. pho raṅ gtsug pa byaṅ chub 'od
2. bla ma zhi ba 'od
3. [lha] bla ma ye śes 'od

Translation

1. *Pho-braṅ*[141] *gtsug-pa* Byaṅ-chub-'od.
2. *Bla-ma* Zhi-ba-'od.
3. *lHa bla-ma* Ye-śes-'od.

Commentary

Zhi-ba-'od (ht. 40 cm) has been depicted in the centre of the composition. What is interesting to note is that in many literary works the title *pho-braṅ* has been given to Zhi-ba-'od instead of Byaṅ-chub-'od. Here he is simply referred to as *bla-ma* (*guru*). Ye-śes-'od who bears the title *bla-chen-po* in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ (gTsug-lag-khaṅ) is called *lha bla-ma*, an epithet used in the renovation inscription and the pillar inscription from Koro, near Pooh in Kinnaur.

Panel III on the South Wall (nos 88–136)

Text

1. kun gyi zhiṅ khams <g>zigs
2. bde ba can gyi zhiṅ khams 'zig
3. rtogs ldan pa'i gnas ky [...]
4. rje la[142] bu rton[143] pas 'dus pa'i rgyud gnas
5. mar pa
6. klu grub
7. a rya de ba
8. jam byaṅs
9. 'jam dbyaṅ

10. 'jam dbyaṅs
11. dbu dma' pa
12. d[xxx]
13. sman lha
14. 'od dpag med
15. 'jam dbyaṅs
16. [...]
17. dbu dma' pa
18. rje [...]
19. coṅ roṅ [x] gzigs pa'i 'kod[144] pa
20. po ta la'i 'kod[145] pa
21. zur khaṅ
22. span ras gzigs
23. chos rgyal gyi 'kod[146] pa
24. byams gliṅ
25. bde ba can
26. [xxx] dga' ba gdoṅ du rje tsun 'jam pa'i gyaṅs gzigs
27. rdo rje gdan gyi 'kod[147] pa
28. [...] khe'u
29. rje rin po che bde mchog lha lde
30. sṅul gduṅ (?) rin po che
31. sman lha
32. byams pa
33. tse <d>pag med
34. lha[148] ba grags pa
35. seṅ bzaṅ
36. klu grub
37. sa<ṅs> rgyas <b>skyaṅ<s>
38. klu dbyaṅ(?) [po]
39. thogs med
40. 'khor chen
41. ka ma la śi la
42. gril bu pa
43. lo hi pa
44. sa ra ha
45. e gra bo ti
46. lha dbaṅ
47. dbyig gñen
48. sṅags lho gag khar chuṅ du gzi(?). Outside this panel appears another inscription which reads:

49. rje btsun chos kyi rgyal po thams cad <m>khyen pa blo [...]l[49]

Translation

Many inscriptions refer to the names of several gods and goddesses of the Buddhist pantheon. The size of the mural is too small to offer any artistic comments on it. Some of the important inscriptions are translated below.

1. See the entire spiritual sphere.
2. See the plan of Sukhāvatī.
3. An abode of Mahāmati [...].
4. The lord Bu-ston sojourned in the Tantrik abode.
5. Mar-pa.
6. Nāgārjuna
7. Āryadeva
20. The plan of Po-ta-la.
23. The plan of Dharmarāja.
25. Sukhāvatī.
27. The plan of Vajrāsana.
34. Candrakīrti
35. Siṁhabhadra
36. Nāgārjuna
37. Buddhapālita
39. Asaṅga
40. 'Khor-chen
41. Kamalaśīla
42. Ghaṇṭāpāda
43. Lohipā
44. Sarāha
45. Indrabhūti
46. Lha-dbaṅ
47. Vasubandhu
49. An august (*bhaṭṭāraka*) lord, the omniscient Blo [...].

Commentary

Numerous gods of the Buddhist pantheon are painted in this panel. Apart from showing the plans of Vajrāsana, Potala, Sukhāvatī and the spiritual sphere, the inscriptional labels record the names of many historical personages. Most prominent among them are the Indian *paṇḍitas* such as Nāgārjura, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Buddhapālita, Kamalaśīla, Candrakīrti, Siṁhabhadra and Vasubandhu. The names of several Mahāsiddhas are

also mentioned: Mar-pa, Nāgārjuna (not the Mādhyamika adherents referred to in inscription 36), Sarāha, Lohipā, Ghaṇṭāpāda, and Indrabhūti. Inscription 49, which forms part of another mural above the panel under discussion, refers to Blo-bzaṅ grags-pa (Sumatikīrti). Inscription 47 refers to Lha-dbaṅ. He seems to the same person painted on the north wall and clearly identifiable with the help of an inscription inscribed below it. The *rje* Bu-rton is the famous Bu-ston (AD 1290–1364) who edited and put into present form the *bKa'-'gyur* and *bsTan-'gyur*.

Orthographically the inscriptions are full of mistakes. No use of the reverse *i* and *da-drag* has been noticed. *bKod-pa* appears as *'kod-pa* regularly. The use of an *anusvāra* sign either in the form of a single dot or a circle is meant to indicate *m* rather than *n*; sometimes it looks like a *gi-gu* sign (see panel III, number 9). The prefixes such as *g, d, b* and *m* have been omitted (e.g., *zigs* for *gzigs, pag* for *dpag, skyaṅs* for *bskyaṅs* and *khyen* for *mkhyen)*. The occurrence of *lha* for *zla* seems to be the inscriber's mistake. *rje bla-ma* is abbreviated to *rJe-la*.

INSCRIPTIONS OF THE BYAMS-PA'I LHA-KHAṄ

Apart from the single-line dedicatory inscription written on the north wall of the sanctum's wall I have noticed three inscriptions of an historical nature in the 'Du-khaṅ (nos 137–9).

Inscriptions 1 and 2

Text

1. ta po[150] dgon skyes mchog la[151] chen sprul sku
   blo bzaṅ dpal ldan bstan pi'i rgyal chen zhi[152] ||
2. 'di gñis po tsha(?) ñid ko ka yin

Translation

1. The chief of Ta-po monastery, the great incarnate lama,
   the lord of religion, Blo-bzaṅ dpal-ldan.
2. Both are (engaged in) discussion or debate (of a religious kind).

Inscription 3

Text

|| brtan[153] pa'i mṅa' bdag gro[154] ba [...][155] mgon (?) ||
la chen rgyal tsho'i yu [...] pal 'byuṅ ba yin
gro[156] mgon yi[157] bzhin' [±2][158] bu rin po che 'di
mdzad pa thar[159] byin[160] zhabs pad stan par gyur

Translation

The magnificent appearance of lord of the religion, the *nātha* (patron or protector) of all living beings. The great ocean [...], the polite patron of the living beings [...] the lotus footed precious Rin-po-che, who has attained perfection to the extreme limit.

Commentary

The three inscriptions in the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ discussed above are explanatory in nature. Two of them on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ are written on a white background with black ink, and the third is written on a red surface. The script of the inscriptions is *dbu-med* which is the principal script used for conducting business, and for elegant writings in Tibet. The formation of the characters is usually done in the running hand, and thus it resembles the *tshugs-riṅ, tshugs-thuṅ* and *tshugs-ma* sub-varieties of the *dbu-med* (headless) Tibetan letters. A few inscriptions in the running hand have been noticed in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. Very close to the *svasti* symbol of inscription 1 appears another inscription over the entrance leading into the complex. The writing is done in War-tu script. Inscription 1 seems to be an important document as it refers to an incarnate lama of Tabo monastery, Blo-bzaṅ dpal-ldan. The problematic part of the inscription is its final syllable *zhi*. Could this be the terminating *ni* or has the writer omitted the prefix *b*? The second inscription refers to two persons yet unidentified engaged in a religious discussion. Inscription number 3 is much more important for establishing the identity of the religious authority depicted above. I have discussed the iconographic and artistic peculiarities of the mural in the previous chapter. Suffice it to add here that the term *rin-po-che* (precious) has normally been reserved for the Dalai Lamas in later inscriptions. The dGe-lugs-pa authority depicted above may be the seventh Dalai Lama, Blo-bzaṅ skal-bzaṅ, renowned as the greatest scholar among the Dalai Lamas.

The use of *'a-chuṅ* has been omitted four times in inscription 3. The curved *śad* (full stop) at the end of the inscription is used only in the inscriptions dated between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. The expression *la-chen* has been used in two inscriptions. The spelling of Tabo, however, remains unchanged as it appears continuously as *ta-po*.

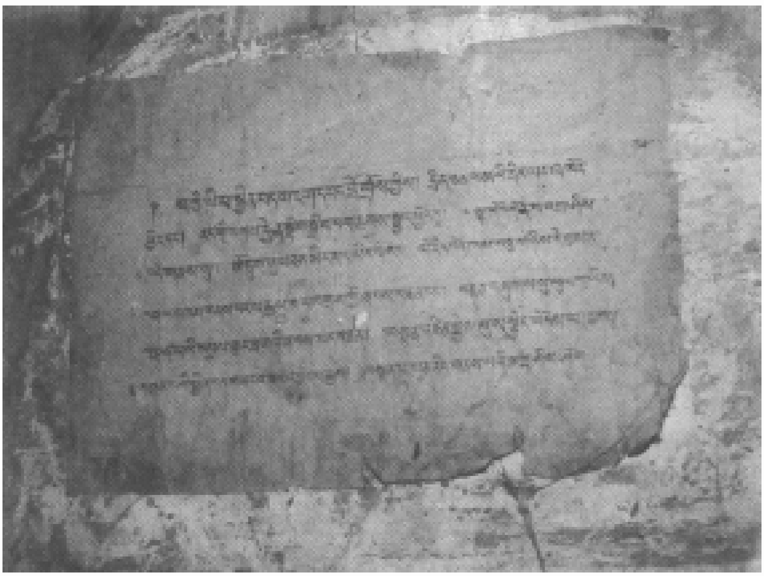
THREE PAPER INSCRIPTIONS (NOS 140–2), GTSUG-LAG-KHAṄ

Three nineteenth-century paper inscriptions, pasted on the eastern and

the northern walls of the 'Du-khaṅ, are equally important from historical point of view for they record the names of several donors, and the nature of donations given to the Tabo monastery in AD 1838 and 1847, respectively. An inscription of AD 1838 refers to the destruction caused to the statues of the monastery by the 'Siṅ's' army, and the subsequent repairs carried out under the leadership of donors from the Pin valley.

Inscription 1

A six-line inscription, written with black ink on a light brownish paper, has been pasted on the north-eastern corner of the 'Du-khaṅ. The size of the paper is 32 cm by 23 cm, and the written portion covers a space of 25 cm by 11 cm. The writer did not mention the presence of another thirteen-line inscription on the north wall, and therefore it seems the inscription under discussion was written before the months of June–July, 1838 (Pl. LXXVII).



Pl. LXXVII Paper inscription on the north-eastern corner of the 'Du khaṅ, gTsug-lag-khaṅ

Text

1. sa kyi li[161] pa sbyin bdag ṅag dbaṅ blo gros kyis | drin can pha ma'i drin lan 'khor

2. phyir daṅ. | raṅ gi 'gal rkyen sdig sgrib bag chags sbyaṅ phyir du | lta pho[162] dgon pa bkra śis
3. bde gnas su[163] | zho drug phul nas zhin maṅ liṅ[164] ños | lo rer bon[165] khal[166] bcu gñis re byas na<s>
4. bskal pa nam gnas<kyi>bar la rgyal ba yab sras kyi zhabs brtan daṅ. | brtan bzhugs su phul ba yin |
5. bstan pa'i dpal gyur bla ma'i zhabs pad brtan || bstan 'dzin skyes bu sa steṅ yoṅs la kyab ||
6. bstan pa'i sbyin bdag mṅa' thaṅ 'byor ba rgyas || bstan pa yun rin gnas pa'i bkra śis śog |

Translation

In the earth-dog year (AD 1838) the patron *(dānapati)* Ṅag-dbaṅ blo-gros (Vāgīndramati) for the gratitude of his benevolent parents, and for the purgation of his own disgrace, misfortune, sins and passions has offered six *zho* in the gracious and prosperous abode, lTa-pho *dgon-pa* (monastery), (and) subsequently purchased a cultivable plot of land called *'maṅ-<g>liṅ'*.

Having done so (he) committed to pay twelve *khals* of produce (from the plot of land purchased) every year up to such time until Jina father and son (Dalai Lama and the Paṇ-chen Laṃa) become firm-footed and firmly seated (i.e. wishing a long life and ever present).

The (illustrious) *śrībhūta* teachers of the doctrine (Buddhism) may live long.

The entire earth be embraced by the followers of Buddhism.

The patron of Buddhism be mighty and wealthy.

The (Buddha's) doctrine may last long. Good fortune.

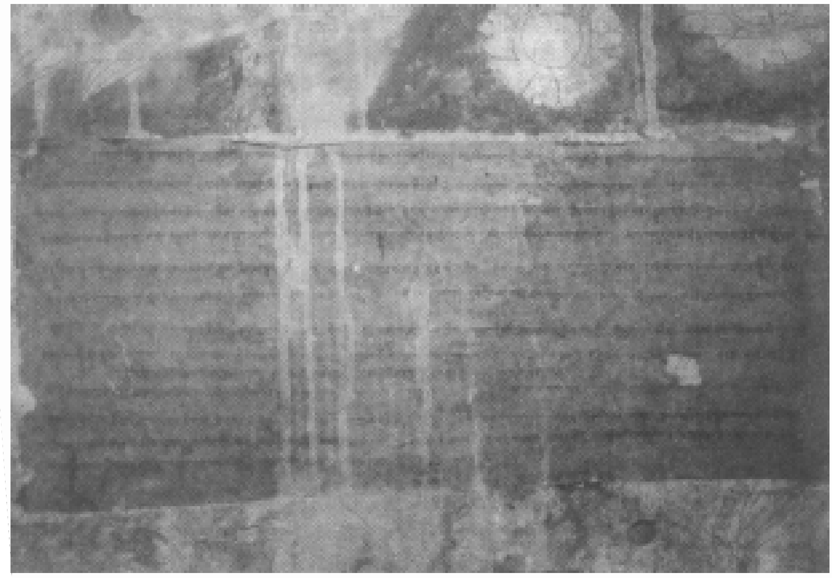
Commentary

The inscription is relatively free from grammatical and orthographic mistakes unlike the two other paper inscriptions discussed below. In line 1, however, the writer has committed an orthographic mistake by substituting *li* for *lo* (year). Interestingly, it records the offering of six *zhos* to Tabo monastery by Ṅag-dbaṅ blo-gros. What was the value of a *zho*? S.C. Das has interpreted it as 'a small gold weight, a little more than one half of a *tola* or rupee'.[167] Thomas Hutton who visited Tabo in June-July of 1838 observed: ' In Spiti the only coins which are received are the old Culdar rupees, and a small silver money of Ludak, of four *annas* in value, called a "Powlee".'[168] He is silent about *zho* and its value remains undetermined. Francke has, however, elsewhere observed that

two *zhos* were equivalent to ten *tolās*[169] (i.e. one *zho* equivalent to five *tolās*). The term *bon* has nothing to do with the Bon religion. It was actually an obligatory share of produce to be paid to the monastic establishments in Spiti. Our patron Ṅag-dbaṅ blo-gras committed to pay every year twelve *khals* of produce to the gracious and prosperous abode, Tabo monastery.

Inscription 2

A thirteen-line inscription written on paper measuring 41 cm by 18 cm, has been placed on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ below the clay statue of Lokeśvararāja. A few letters in almost each line have been damaged due to the percolation of water. Line 9 below line 8 begins after the syllabic *pa*. In the transcription and translation given below line 9 begins with *spogs* written after the cross mark in the original paper document (Pl. LXXVIII).



Pl. LXXVIII Thirteen-line paper inscription on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ, gTsug-lag-khaṅ

Text

1. oṁ sva ti[170] siddhaṁ sku gsum mṅon du gyur pa'i ston pa saṅs rgyas daṅ sde [snod][171] gsum gyi<s> phyug pa'i dam chos daṅ

| bslab pa gsum gyis mdzes pa'i dge 'dun ste[172] | skyabs gnas dkon mchog gsum la gus phyag 'tshal | kyai la [gs][173]

2. mkha' mñam 'gro la mkyen rtsa[174] rab dgoṅs nas | graṅs med gsum du tshogs gñis rab rdzogs nas | stoṅ gsum mi mjed zhiṅ gi dpal gyur pa | 'drin mchog śā kya'i rtog[175] la gus phyag 'tshal | kyai lags | mthun pa'i smon lam dge tshogs [ji sñed pa][176]
3. smad[177] 'byuṅ zhes spyad pa spyod tshe rnam maṅ mi 'dral[178] zhiṅ | bskal bzaṅ gcig pu mdzad ['phri]n thar phyin nas | rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas stoṅ la gus phyag 'tshal | kyai lags gliṅ gi mchog gyur 'dzam bu gliṅ lho yi phyogs su dgra bcom bzhug<s>
4. gnas ti se gaṅs kyi mgul | ma gros[179] bzhugs gnas ma smad gyu'i mtsho | ta mchog[180] kha 'babs[181] brug pa'i 'dun[182] phyogs 'dir | pho braṅ chen po'i pha yul lha sa 'dir sa la<s>'bur du mthon[183] pa'i gnas chen po sta la mi dbaṅ
5. chen po sa skyoṅ rje brtsun ṅa<g> dbaṅ 'jam dpal tshul khrims rgya mtsho'i sku tshe brtan zhiṅ 'phrin las rgyas rgyur gcig[184] | <zhabs> pad dkal [brgy]'i[185] bar du bstan[186] gyur gcig[187] | khyod ki[188] mṅa' zhabs bzaṅ po <la> spyi ti.zer |
6. dge bcu 'dzom<s> yul cuṅ sta po 'dir | dgon pa khyad du 'phags pa sta po tag[189] chen chos gliṅ zer | dge 'dun thugs mthun khrims gtsaṅ <b>śad bsgrub dar zhiṅ rgyas | me bya ba dgu pa'i tshes bcu drug la la siṅ gi
7. smaṅ[190] thon nas | sprul pa'i gtsug lag khaṅ 'di yi sten[191] sku rnmas<b>śig nas | de'i 'byol sos[192] dge 'dun rnams kyi<s> sa khyi zla <ba> bzhi pa 'i tshes lṅa la 'byol sos kyi mgo[193] <b>tsugs pa yin | gnam gaṅ la gags[194] med lhun gyi<s>
8. 'grub[195] pa yin | sku rten 'di la dge rtsa byuṅ <b>graṅs pa | kyed gliṅ no no bskal bzaṅ <m>thun rkyen byuṅ | rgyu pa'i no no <m>thun rkyen byuṅ | chu rab no no <m>thun rkyen byuṅ | braṅ <m>khar nas <m>thun rkyen byuṅ |
9. spogs na<s> mtshe byiṅ[196] dar rgyas chaṅ chos[197] gñis daṅ gsol bya[198] gro dkar du 'grub[199] tshe dbaṅ chaṅ chos[200] gcig daṅ gsol bya[201] gro dkar | ta po dpon po rdo rje
10. so nams[202] <kyi> gsol bya[203] yaṅ yaṅ byuṅ | dpon po rig 'dzin rdo rje<'i> chaṅ chos[204] <g>cig daṅ gsol bya[205] yaṅ yaṅ byuṅ sru nu<'i> mar po re gaṅ byuṅ | stobs pa<'i> mar po re gaṅ byuṅ | la ri ra mtshe[206] byed
11. sgra[207] 'dul chaṅ chos[208] <g>cig daṅ gsol bya[209] | tshe dbaṅ rdo

rje<'i> chaṅ chos[210] <g>cig byuṅ | bkra śis tshe riṅ<gi> chaṅ chos <g>cig daṅ gsol bya[211] byuṅ | 'dor[212] na pin[213] pa'i sbyin bdag gtso byas pa'i spyi ti sbyin bdag rnams kyi mthun

12. rkyen byuṅ | rgyu dge ba'i rtsa ba 'di bzheṅs *pa'i* phan yon gyi<s> | rge[214] rtsa byuṅ ba'i dad ldan rnams kyi tshe 'dir sde[215] kyid[216] tshe riṅ zhiṅ phyi ma bla med rdzogs saṅs rgyas par śog | lha gzo[217] ba 'di ni dge sloṅ blo bzaṅ rdzod[218] pa daṅ | bkra śis
13. so[219] nams daṅ gñis <kyis> brtsun[220] 'brus bskyid nas gags[221] med lhun gyi<s> 'grub[222] pa yin. || bkra śis |

Translation

1–5. Oṁ, good fortune and success. Profound salutations to manifested three Buddha-bodies (*trikāya)*, to the holy doctrine of the Tripiṭaka, to the Buddhist community adorned with three-fold education,[223] and to the place of the Buddha, Dharma and the Community (*triratna*).

Oh, Yes. Profound salutations to the excellent lord of the illustrious three thousand worlds, Śākyaketu, who out of kindness gave enlightenment to the infinite beings, and fully accomplished three countless (aeons), two worlds (i.e. world of knowledge: *jñāna*, and world of virtues: *puṇya)*.

Oh, Yes. Profound salutations to the thousand supreme Buddhas[224] of the excellent and harmonious world who at the time are engaged in admirable deeds free from many diversities for aeons.

Oh, Yes. Jambudvīpa is the best of all islands. In the southern direction dwell the Arhats. In the neck of the snowy-peaked Kailāśa is situated the blue glittering Mansarowar (lake). In front of the cascading Brahmaputra river appears the father-land Lhasa (full) of great places, and there rises prominently the great sacred site, Po-ta-la. The great ruling king *rje-btsun (bhaṭṭāraka)* Ṅag-dbaṅ 'jam-dpal tshul-khrims rgya-mtsho, may he prosper and live long. May his lotus-feet be firm for a hundred aeons (*kalpas)*. Your respected people are called as Spyi-ti (i.e. inhabitants of Spyi-ti).

6–7. In this little sTa-po, which is the rallying point of ten virtues,[225] is placed the greatly exalted monastery, *sta-po stag-chen chos-gliṅ* (the great tiger sTa-po, the religious island). The Buddhist community was unanimously and wisely expounding the religion and the laws (of the monastery). (At the same time) Singh's army appeared on the sixteenth day of the ninth month of the fire-bird year (AD 1837) demolished the statues of this sublime monastery (*vihāra*). To restore (the damaged stat-

ues), the monks started a restoration on the fifth day of the fourth month of the earth-dog year (AD 1838), and fully accomplished it without hindrance by the new moon (*amāvasya*).

8–11. (The donors) who rendered help (for the restoration) of the statues may be listed:

1. No-no bsKal-bzaṅ of Kyed-gliṅ(?)
2. No-no of rGyu;
3. No-no of Chu-rab;
4. (No-no) of Braṅ <m>khar;
5. Tshe-riṅ dar-rgyas of sPogs gave wine, tea twice and *gro-dkar*;[226]
6. Don-grub tshe-dbaṅ gave wine once, tea and *gro-dkar*;
7. *dpon-po* rDo-rje bsod-nams of Tabo served tea many times;
8. *dpon-po* Rig-'dzin rdo-rje served wine once and tea many times;
9. Sru-nu and sTogs-pa offered one *po-re*[227] of butter;
10. *ra-'tsho byed* dGra- 'dul of Lari gave tea once and wine;
11. Tshe-dbaṅ rdo-rje gave wine once;
12. bKra-śis tshe-riṅ served wine once, and tea.

11–13. Briefly, under the leadership of the donors of the Pin (valley), the donors of Spyi-ti (also) provided necessary articles. All the devout who accumulated merits by constructing the (statues) should remain happy in the present life, and attain supreme and perfect Buddhahood in the future. The diligent artists, monk Blo-bzaṅ bzod-pa and bKra-śis bsod-nams, spontaneously completed (the work) unimpeded. Mangalaṁ.

Commentary

What becomes clear from the translation of the inscription above is that the Tibetan syntax underwent a complete restructuring in Spiti. There is a clear tendency to drop prefixes such as *g*, *b* and *m* : *cig* for *gcig*, *tsugs* for *btsugs* and *khar* for *mkhar*.[228] This tendency is noticed in cases where compound consonants are used: *braṅ-khar* for *braṅ-mkhar*. There are numerous examples of the use of wrong cases: *kyis*, *gyis*, *nas* and *las* appear as *kyi*, *gyi*, *na* and *la*. The final *sa* has been dropped twice and *ga* only once (*ṅa* for *ṅag*). The exclamatory *kyai lags* occurs thrice in first three lines.

The inscription provides insight into the history and geography of Spiti which are not known from other sources. In line 5, a reference is made to the ruling king of Tibet, Ṅag-dbaṅ 'jam-dpal tshul-khrims rgya-mtsho and that he may 'prosper and live long'. The writer of the docu-

ment did not know that the tenth Dalai Lama mentioned in the inscription died on the first day of the ninth month of the fire-bird year (i.e. AD 1837).[229]

Apart from the monastery being referred to as *dpal-ldan bkra-śis bde-gnas* in the renovation inscription, and simply as *bkra-śis bde-gnas* in the paper inscription discussed above, there is yet another name which reads *sta-po stag-chen chos-gliṅ* (l. 6) This and the following lines inform us that the monastery's statues (*sku rnams*) were demolished by the army of 'Siṅ' on the sixteenth day of the ninth month of the fire-bird year (AD 1837). In the chronicles of Ladakh the word '*siṅ*' or '*siṅ-pa*' has been used for both the Sikhs and the Dogras.[230] What was intended to be explained by the writer of the inscription can be best known from the fascinating eye-witness account of Thomas Hutton, who was the first to record the impressions of the people of Tabo on the ravages caused to the monastery. On 16 June 1838, Hutton observed:

> Last year [1837] when the Ladak rajah was obliged to seek protection in Bussahr from Runjeet's troops, the *figures* (italics ours) in this temple were sadly mutilated. The houses of the Lamas were pulled down, and the noses and hands of the idols were cut off and thrown into the river. This outrage is generally attributed by the people to their invader, but in reality it seems that it was perpetrated by the followers of the Ladak rajah themselves, who when deserted by their master, thought to ingratiate themselves with their conquerors, by assuming the same form of turban, and mutilating the gods of their own countrymen. If asked who defaced the images, the Lamas always accuse the 'Singa', as they term the Seikhs but when questioned as to the numbers who invaded them, all accounts agree in stating *six* or *seven* men, and the rest were the adherents of the Ladak rajah. These fellows also, finding the opportunity favourable, and knowing that the blame would be laid upon others, plundered every village in Spiti and levied a fine of fifteen rupees each . . . Every excess is however attributed to the Seikhs.[231]

This was how the people of Spiti were forced to believe by the soldiers of the Dogra army who proclaimed themselves as Sikhs. Hutton's statement can be questioned when he stated that the damage caused to 'the figures in this monastery' was 'perpetrated by the followers of the Ladak rajah themselves'.[232] To me, it seems unbelievable that the followers of the prince mChog-sprul had ever enough time to halt at Tabo and to cause damage to the statues. Were they not frightened of the Dogra army who wanted to capture their prince? It was actually the army of the Dogras, not necessarily led by Zorawar Singh (his name is not mentioned in the inscription) who were pursuing the prince-king

of Ladakh, mChog-sprul who had fled from Ladakh to Hundar in Nubra and from there to Spiti and finally, reached Sarahan, the capital of the Bushahr state in October 1837. The *'siṅ-gi dmag'* in the inscription refers to the 'Sikh's army' though the real damage was caused by the Dogras who posed themselves as the turbaned Sikhs. However, it must be remembered that Ranjit Singh accorded recognition to Gulab Singh's conquest of Ladakh according to a British document, dated 8 August 1838.[233]

Several localities of the Spiti valley are referred to in the inscription. They include Kyed-gliṅ (this seems to be a village Kyuling in the Bar-shik *koṭhī*), Gyu (rGyu), Chabrang (Chu-rab), Dankhar (Braṅ-mkhar), Poh (sPogs), Tabo (sTa-po and Ta-po), Lari and Pin. Among the most prominent donors were included the four noble families of Kyed-gliṅ, rGu, Chu-rab and Braṅ-mkhar. No-no bsKal-bzaṅ appears as the first donor among the noble families.[234] He seems to have provided the leadership to the renovation work. Fortunately, the names of the two artists (*lha bzos)* who completed the work are also mentioned.

Inscription 3

A five-line inscription has been pasted on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ just below the lotus seat of the guardian deity, Vajrāveśa. The size of the paper is 35.5 cm by 10.5 cm. The first letters of lines 1 and 3 are illegible. The document seems to have been written by a devout follower who did not possess a sound knowledge of the Tibetan language as one can notice numerous orthographic and grammatical mistakes in it.

Text

1. [sa dir] me mo lug la dkon mchog phug skral me me zhig[235] sos la ri me mas[236] daṅ chol[237] ldan bla ma mi tho daṅ. | pogs . kyi sa daṅ chuṅ
2. rgyas [xxx][238] tho daṅ tshogs pa'i zhabs stog[239] lags[240] kyaṅ || du ruṅ[241] (?) yin kyaṅ zhabs rtogs[242] lags[243] par bgyis |
3. [xx][244] ru dge <'> dun rnams dṅos la 'di na<s> ye śes pa dge 'u byuṅ jo mo(Ø)[245] slob[246] *bzaṅ* dge 'u byuṅ pogs na<s> chos <'> phel daṅ ṅaṅ pa[247]
4. 'byor gñis kyi dge 'u byuṅ[248] | dge sloṅ daṅ <b>kra śis dge 'u byuṅ me(Ø)[249] mas[250] bla ma spon[251] la <g>sol ja chaṅ śa gaṅ
5. | yag yag byuṅ lha khaṅ 'di la zhabs rtog[252] lags[253] *par* bgyis || <b>kra śis | lta po sa drug dar rgyas dge 'u byuṅ. [|]

Translation

In the fire-female-sheep (*me-mo-lug)* year (AD 1847) (maintained) an account of men (provided by) dKon-mchog of Phug-skral,[254] *me-me*[255] Zhiṅ-sos of Lari and *me-me* Chos-ldan *bla-ma*; the land at Pogs[256] village and Chuṅ-rgyas(?) [...] and the people assembled together provided praiseworthy service. Today, and likewise in future (they) will render good service (to this monastery). The members of the Buddhist community, Ye-śes, the *bhikṣuṇī* (a nun), Blob-bzaṅ of (Tabo) genuinely served; Chos-'phel and Ṅaṅ-dpal-'byor both of Pogs village rendered propitious service. (Likewise) *dge-sloṅ* (*bhikṣu*) and bKra-śis reṅdered good service. *Me-me* teacher (*bla-ma)* dPon-la was served with tea, wine[257] and meat pleasantly. (I) have provided virtuous service to this temple (*lha-khaṅ*). Good fortune. Dar-rgyas belonging to *sa drug* family of lTa-po (too) rendered meritorious service.

Commentary

This is the last extant record available from the monastic complex of Tabo. The document omits the name of the writer but records the services rendered by the people of Phug-skral, Lari, Pogs and lTa-po to the monastery. This seems to be a record of the donations in kind rendered to the monastery on the occasion of some festival. Blob-bzaṅ (l. 3) and bKra-śis (l. 4) mentioned in the inscription seem to be the same persons who completed the restoration work carried out in the monastery earlier in AD 1838. Of particular interest is the occurrence of the word *me-me* (ll. 1. 4). In the Milchan and Theburskud dialects of Kinnaur, and the Tibetan spoken in Hungrung of Kinnaur and Spiti, *me-me* refers to paternal grandfather. This is quite clear from the vocabulary prepared by Gerard, J.D. Cunningham and T.G. Bailey. In this context it has been used for the grand old man of the village.

The use of the prefixes *g, b* and *'a* are omitted. Occasionally, the *'greṅ-bu* sign is omitted: *lags* instead of *legs*. There is an instance when the superscribed *l* of the second syllable was sounded as final consonant of the preceding syllable: *chol-ldan*. For the word *tog* (service or worship), three different forms such as *stog, rtog, rtogs* have been used.

NOTES

1. The third Śāradā inscription was noticed as recently as 9 June 1997.
2. Some Tibetan inscriptions written on the walls of the rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ have been written in 1974.

3. Laxman S. Thakur, *Visualizing a Buddhist Sūtra: Inscription, Mural and Manuscript from the Gaṇḍavyūha of the Avataṁsaka-sūtra* (forthcoming).
4. A.H. Francke, *Antiquities*, pt. I, p. 33.
5. Pritzker, 'The Wall Paintings of Tabo', p. 41, fig. 4.
6. Completely damaged but faint traces of illegible writing visible.
7. It reads *hyavadada* in the Tibetan version and *hyavadat* in Sanskrit
8. *teṣāṁ*.
9. Daniel Boucher, 'The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and its Role in the Medieval Cult of Relics', *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, 1991, p. 11.
10. Inscribed below dKon-mchog 'byuṅ-gnas, the Buddha of the eastern direction.
11. This dictum, written in the Śāradā script, has been noticed on the pedestal of the Vajravārāhī image at Chahri, see Cunningham, *ASI*, vol. V, pp. 177–8, pl. XLII, fig. 2.
12. A third Śāradā inscription has been noticed on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ where the life of the Buddha is depicted. The two first letters clearly read *rā* and *mu* (*rāmu*) and are followed by the *svasti* sign. After that, follows *ṣya* or *śya*. The last letter is partially legible with the *o* sign, as in the case of *nirodhaṁ* in an earlier case.
13. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, pt. 1, no. 13, pp. 156–7, pl. XV.
14. Ibid., no. 20, p. 177, pl. XXa.
15. *o* sign in similar style is noticed on the north wall of the 'Du-khaṅ.
16. *See* B.K. Kaul Deambi, *Corpus of Śāradā Inscriptions of Kashmir*, Delhi, 1982, pl. 2.
17. Ibid., Tables 3 A–D.
18. Inscriptions 2, 3a and 3b are inscribed on rock number 58 located near the row of ruined *stūpas* (Fig. 19).
19. This seems to be historically a significant inscription as it gives us the old spelling of Tabo as *ta-po* which has been maintained persistently by the Buddhist community over the centuries on numerous wall inscriptions noticed in the monastic complex (see Table 17). I do not favour the use of *ta-pho* as has been done by Deborah Klimburg-Salter and her colleagues. Neither is it used on the wall inscriptions nor does it make any sense, and hence there is no justification for its continued use.
20. Francke, 'Notes on Rock-carvings', pp. 398–401; 'Some More Rock-carvings', pp. 361–3; 'Archaeological Notes on Balu-mkhar in Western Tibet', *IA*, vol. XXXIV, Sept. 1905, pp. 203-10; 'The Rock Inscriptions at Mulbe', *IA*, vol. XXXV, March 1906, pp. 72-81. 'Archaeology in Western Tibet: Khalatse', *IA*, vol. XXXV, Sept. 1906, pp. 237–41 and Dec. 1906, pp. 325–33. Two equally interesting articles again by Francke are: 'Kleine Archäologische Erträge einer Missionsreise nach Zangskar in Westtibet', *ZDMG*, vol. LX, 1906, pp. 645–61; vol. LXI, 1907, pp. 645–7, and 'Historische Dokumente', pp. 583–614.

21. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chamba State*, p. 85, vv. 47–8.
22. H. Goetz, *The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba*, p. 27.
23. *See* ch. II.
24. I believe that majority of the folios of the *Prajñāpāramitā* class *pothis* seem to have been translated either at Tabo or brought from Kashmir.
25. There are a few examples of the reversed *i* in the inscriptions related to the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*.
26. As many as fourteen examples of the reversed *i* in the renovation inscription of Byaṅ-chub-'od can be seen.
27. Cited by Berthold Laufer, 'Bird Divination among the Tibetans' in *Sino-Tibetan Studies*, collected by H. Walravens, vol. II. New Delhi, 1987, p. 100, fn. 2.
28. Ibid., p. 101.
29. This seems to be a general tendency in the early documents recovered from Central Asia. For a brief summary, see A. H. Francke, 'Notes on Sir Aurel Stein's Collection of Tibetan Documents from Chinese Turkestan', *JRAS*, pt. 1, 1914, pp. 37–59.
30. M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, vol. III, rpt, New Delhi, 1981, pls XI–XII, CXVII–CXXI.
31. M. Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia*, vol. IV, rpt, New Delhi, 1980–81, pls CXXX and CXXXI.
32. Ibid, pl. CXXX.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., pls CXXXII–CXXXIII.
35. M. Aurel Stein, *Serindia*, vol. IV, rpt, Delhi, 1981, pls CLXXIII and CLXXIV
36. *saṅs*
37. *pa* after *bstan* has been omitted to retain a seven-syllabled verse.
38. *'a-chuṅ* omitted.
39. Totally damaged on the wall but can be read as *bag*.
40. *'a-chuṅ* is written below *ba* because of the paucity of space on the edge. This tendency should not be construed as a rule in the inscriptions of Tabo.
41. Only *tha* occurs in the P edition of the *So-sor thar-pa* (see TT, vol. 42, Tokyo–Kyoto, 1957, fol. 18a, l. 7) The same text provides *sde* instead of *de* in line 3 above.
42. From the availabe space noted at the end of the line 6 it becomes clear that the inscriber has written only *rdzogs so*. The last letter of the *rdzogs* is clearly visible.
43. Cog-gru in S.C. Vidyabhushan's. 'So-sor-thar-pa; or, a Code of Buddhist Monastic Laws: Being the Tibetan version of Prātimokṣa of the Mūla-sarvāstivāda School', *JASB*, vol. XI, nos 3–4, March–April 1915, p. 130. Cog-ro in P seems to be correct.
44. The damaged letters perhaps read *'khor ba daṅ*.

45. Now the Buddhist community of Tabo calls her rDo-rje chen-mo (Mahāvajra-devī).
46. Possibly *btsun-pa*.
47. *bla chen-po* in CBM, No. 5, fol. 179, l. 1.
48. Correct form would be *dge'*.
49. *dge'*.
50. The prefix *d* is unnecessarily added.
51. *'grus*.
52. *Śramṇera*, who has taken the vows of *pravrajyā*.
53. Could this be Jalma in Lahaul? Even by the close of the nineteenth century Jalma *koṭhī* had under its jurisdiction thirty-two villages. *See* A.H. Diack, *The Assessment Report of the Waziri Lahaul in the Kulu Tahsil of the Kangra District 1890*, Lahore, 1891, Appendix B.
54. This could be Nako in Kinnaur district.
55. Some unidentified locality of Kṛṣṇanagar.
56. The name of Nā-ga-rā-dza also occurs on the pedestal of several metal statues discovered by me in Kinnaur, *see* Thakur, 'Tibetan Historical Inscriptions from Kinnaur and Lahaul–Spiti, vol. II, pp. 967–79.
57. Perhaps read *gu-ge*.
58. Pritzker has erroneously put forward an argument that the person referred to in the inscription is Byaṅ-chub-'od (*Orientations*, vol. 20, 1989, p. 42).
59. Thakur, 'Tibetan Historical Inscriptions from Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti', p. 976.
60. *See* TT, vol. 27, Tokyo–Kyoto, 1956, fol. 1.
61. According to Tucci (Indo-Tibetica III. 1, p. 74), they include: (i) Khrom-'u, (ii) brTen-ti dge' from Mag-pi-tsa, (iii) rTan-po-gsug from Rum, (iv) Ye-śes of Hug-ar and (v) gÑen-tiṅ from Rum, the donator of this true lamp.
62. Translations of this inscription given by Tucci (ibid., p. 73) and Pritzker (*Orientations*, vol. 20, 1989, p. 40) are wrong.
63. 'Dul-ba byaṅ-chub is the same *mahāsthavira* who is mentioned on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ with the same title. Pritzker is again misled by the syllables *byaṅ-chub* and he added that a reference is made to Byaṅ-chub-'od. The second line is wrongly recorded in Tibetan by him as it must read *ta-po-yi* instead of *ta-po'i* (Pritzker, ibid., p. 40, fig. 3b).
64. At least 5 cm portion of the wall on the right hand side is damaged.
65. *'a-chuṅ* omitted in Tucci (Indo-Tibetica, III. 1, p. 190, l. 1).
66. *ñon-moṅs*.
67. *bdag*.
68. Perhaps *ni* as is the case in many verses.
69. *kyi*.
70. Correctly, it can be read as *'dus* not *'dul*.
71. *bka'-yis*.

72. K. Angrup Lahuli suggested *bzhin las-la zhugs*.
73. Tucci has read it as *myaṅ*, an abbreviation of *mya-ṅan (nirvāṇa)*.
74. Added from Tucci, (Indo-Tibetica, p. 197, l. 6).
75. Ibid., l. 7.
76. Totally damaged.
77. Now 13 cm space in this line is illegible.
78. The beginning of the line is totally damaged.
79. *btsol*.
80. The verses of eleven-syllables begin here onwards.
81. *mthoṅs*.
82. *mñam*.
83. *bstsags-dgra*.
84. *mtho-bas-'tshams*.
85. *gdugs*.
86. Omitted in Tucci (Indo-Tibetica, p. 198).
87. Perhaps a variant of *spyan*, i.e. eye.
88. *draṅs*.
89. *par*.
90. Perhaps *bstan-pa'i*.
91. About 4 cm portion in the beginning of the line is totally illegible.
92. *bsam-gtan*.
93. *drug*.
94. *gar*.
95. *ñon moṅs*.
96. Added from Tucci (Indo-Tibetica, p. 198).
97. The damaged portion of the line measures about 17 cm after *rdziṅ la*.
98. This should be an eleven-syllabled verse now completely illegible. I could not trace *tshul-khrims* in the beginning of line 11 as noted by Tucci.
99. *'dzems*.
100. Again verses with nine syllables.
101. *brgyand ciṅ*.
102. Three syllables separated from the earlier six-syllabled verse; together they make a nine-syllabled verse.
103. Six or seven characters illegible.
104. *khaṅ*.
105. Tucci has read it as *'khor*.
106. Perhaps no writing was done between the double *śads*.
107. Ye-śes-'od's mural is painted on the south wall of the sGo-khaṅ (gTsug-lag-khaṅ). He is referred to in the dKor (Koro) inscription as *dpal-lha btsan-po lha bla-ma*, *see* Thakur, 'A Tibetan Inscription by lHa Bla-ma Ye-shes-'od from dKor (sPu) Rediscovered', *JRAS*, vol. 4, pt. 3, November 1994, p. 371, l. 1.
108. This name is written below a seated figure possibly of Byaṅ-chub-'od.

The title *lha-btsun-pa* is also given to Nā-ga-rā-dza and De-ba-rā-dza in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ.

109. I do not think that the entire temple was pulled down and rebuilt by Byaṅ-chub-'od. It is quite possible that the new decorations were carried out in the 'Du-khaṅ and the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ. Murals in the sGo-khaṅ do not show any traces of renovations. For the varying meanings of *gso-ba*, *see* Krang dByi sun, ed., *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, 3 vols. 2nd edn., Beijing, 1986, vol. III, p. 3028.

110. Not to be confused with the gTsug-lag-khaṅ. The inscriptional evidence is clear enough to show that the renovation inscription was inscribed after the painting of the sanctum was completed.

111. A prayer in which merit from a virtuous act is dedicated to the fulfilment of the wishes of one's prayer.

112. The monk Śes-kha-rgyu-bdag wanted to tell a short history of his patrons, Ye-śes-'od and Byaṅ-chub-'od.

113. H.A. Jäschke has explained '*byor ba* as 'stick to', 'adhere to' or 'to be prepared to'. *See* his *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, rpt. Delhi, 1992, p. 399.

114. *ga* of the *gsum* is clearly legible. The available space before the next syllable can adjust only two letters.

115. *bde-gnas* also means a level place, thus it has a double meaning.

116. *bslab-pa-gsum (triśikṣā)* included: (i) training in higher conduct; (ii) training in higher meditation and, (iii) training in higher wisdom; *see* Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 1323.

117. No special category of artists such as architects, painters or sculptors is explained here. I take the meaning of the *mkhan bzho* to be equivalent to the Sanskrit *śilpi* (artisan).

118. *bcos* means *pratikṛti*, i.e. to refine, heal and mend (Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 396, *s.v.*).

119. Perhaps *bzhin las-la zhugs* as suggested by K. Angrup Lahuli.

120. I am not very sure if *mña'* could be an abbreviation of *mya-ṅan* as suggested by Tucci.

121. Perhaps a contrast has been drawn. Byaṅ-chub-'od's body was also adorned with the thirty-two marks like that of the Buddha.

122. Tucci has translated it as 'images of many figures' (Indo-Tibetica, p. 201) but I think that a reference is made to statues (*sku gzugs*) and *bri ba* (or *bris-ba*) i.e. designs or pictures.

123. Two letters after *dag kun* perhaps read *bzo* (artists).

124. The *sārthavāha* used to be the leader of the caravan. It was his duty to provide all provisions and necessities to each member of the group. His role is beautifully explained in the Āraṇyaka Parva, 297.45 of the *Mahābhārata* as: *sārthaḥ pravasato mitram bhāryā mitram gṛhasataḥ*, 'to those who go out on a journey the caravan is a friend in the same

way as wives are friends when they reside in their homes.' Similarly in this line the actions of the *sārthavāha* are explained as 'impartial'.

125. I take *stsag* as a variant of *bstsags* explained by Das (*A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 1016) as accumulated, hoarded.
126. *dgra* is enemy (*amitra*), *see* Lokesh Chandra, *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*, International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi, 1959, p. 421.
127. *tho' bas tsams* is perhaps equivalent to *mtho bas 'tshams*, i.e. evil designs or mischievous behaviour.
128. Das has discussed the four kinds of *'dod chags* in Buddhism. They include physical wants, desires of the intellect, sensual desires and moral desires other than those for perfect emancipation (Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 691).
129. Supernatural perception (*abhijña*) is of six kinds: (i) *lha'i mig gi mṅon-śes*: seeing anything clearly as if with divine sight; (ii) *lha'i rna-ba'i mṅon-śes*: perfect divine hearing; (iii) *pha-rol gyi sems śes-pa- am*: knowledge of another's heart; (iv) *rdzu-'phrul gyi bya-ba śes-pa'i mṅon-śes*: knowledge of the four forms of miracle; (v) *sṅon-gyi gnas-rjes dran-pa'i mṅon-śes*: the power of remembering the acts in one's former existence and (vi) *zag-pa-zad-pa śes-pa'i mṅon śes-pa*: the knowledge of the destruction of the passions. For further elaboration of each perception, *see* Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, pp. 365–6.
130. *bkod.*
131. *bkod.*
132. *'brom ston.*
133. I do not think that this could be the present dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ.
134. Tentative readings.
135. *nam-mkha'-'od.*
136. *braṅ.*
137. Illegible.
138. *nam-mkha'-'od.*
139. Possibly *rje btsun chos.*
140. *See* ch. III.
141. *pho braṅ* is a title normally given to Zhi-ba-'od.
142. For *bla.*
143. *ston.*
144. *bkod.*
145. *bkod.*
146. *bkod.*
147. *bkod.*
148. *zla.*
149. Perhaps *grags-pa.*
150. No superscribed *r* in *ta.*
151. *sa* and *la* are not clearly differentiated but I read it as *la.*

152. Last character may be *ni* but it looks like *zhi*. Is the preceding letter *ba* missing? Then the reading will be *rgyal chen bzhi (caturmahārāja)*.
153. *bstan*.
154. *'gro*.
155. Perhaps *yoṅs kyi*.
156. *'gro*.
157. *yid*.
158. *nur* for *nor*.
159. *mthar*.
160. *'byin*.
161. *lo*.
162. *lta-pho* noticed for the first time in the inscriptions of Tabo.
163. The name of the monastery, also referred to in the renovation inscription of Byaṅ-chub-'od as *dpal-ldan bkra'-śis bde-gnas*.
164. *gliṅ*.
165. Bon (or *bun*) is a local word used for a payment or more appropriately an obligation of secular and religious kind: the former being distinguished as *mkhar-kyi-bon* (or *bun*) 'fort due' and the latter as *dgon-pa'i-bon* 'the monastery due'. The donor Ṅag-dbaṅ blo-gros committed to pay twelve *khals* of grain to the monastery every year.
166. One *khal* is equivalent to twenty *bre* of barley (one *bre* consists of eight *chaṭṭānks* of weight). William Hay, who was the first administrator to conduct the revenue settlement of Spiti is silent about *khal* but it was generally considered equivalent to the Lahauli *lac*. In Spiti, a *lac* would correspond to '32 catchā seers or 12 pucka seers' (Hay, 'Report on the Valley of Spiti', p. 440). J.B. Lyall who completed the settlement survey of Spiti between 1865 to 1869 added: 'The khal of Spiti is a measure based on the load a sheep can carry, like the Lahauli·lākh, but it is smaller, ranging 24 to 32 lbs. in capacity; twenty teh go to one khaḷ. The two measures are really the same; the difference is only one of local names and standard (*Report on the Land Revenue Settlement*, p. 114, fn.).
167. Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 1076, *s.v.*
168. Hutton in *JASB*, vol. IX, 1840, p. 564.
169. Francke, *Antiquities*, pt. II, p. 42.
170. There is a general tendency to omit the superscribed *s* in the inscriptions of the nineteenth century. It should, however, be read as *svasti*.
171. *snod*.
172. *te*.
173. Two letters are erased in the paper.
174. *brtses*.
175. *tog*.
176. Partially damaged on the edge of the paper.
177. *rmad*.
178. *bral*.

179. *dros.*
180. The superscribed *r* has been omitted.
181. *'bab.*
182. *mdun.*
183. *'thon.*
184. *cig.*
185. *bskal brgy'i.*
186. *brtan.*
187. *cig.*
188. *kyi.*
189. *stag.*
190. *dmag.*
191. *rten.*
192. It should not be changed to *soṅ* as has been done by Steinkellner. Also there are several irregularities in the transcription of ll. 6–7 by him, *see* 'A Report on the "Kanjur" of Ta pho', *EW*, vol. 44, no. 1, March 1994, p. 132, fn. 49.
193. *'go.*
194. *gegs.*
195. *grub pa.*
196. Could this be *riṅ*(?)
197. *mchod.*
198. *ja.*
199. *don grub.*
200. *mchod.*
201. *ja.*
202. *bsod nams.*
203. *ja.*
204. *mchod.*
205. *ja.*
206. *'tsho.*
207. *dgra.*
208. *mchod.*
209. *ja.*
210. *mchod.*
211. *ja.*
212. *mdor.*
213. *spin.*
214. *dge*; also *rge* for *dge* has earlier been noticed in the inscriptions of the sGo-khaṅ dated AD 996.
215. *bde.*
216. *skyid.*
217. *bzo.*
218. *bzod.*

219. *bsod nams.*
220. *brtson 'grus.*
221. *gegs.*
222. *grub.*
223. *See* n. 116 above.
224. Thousand Buddhas painted on the walls of the sanctum.
225. The ten virtues are not taking life, not to take what is not given; to observe the purity of morals; to speak the truth; to speak gently; not to break a promise; not to slander; not to covet another's property; not create mischief or think of doing injury to others and to pay regard to the purest doctrine.
226. *gro-dkar* in Spiti is a pre-lunch meal, normally served to those people who work in the agricultural fields. However, the term could be loosely translated as 'mixed rice'. Several inquiries about *gro-dkar* at Tabo revealed that this term is in existence even today in Spiti.
227. *Pore* is a weighing instrument. It consists of a steel-yard and lever. It was used for weighing wool, salt and medicinal herbs in Bushahr, Lahaul and Simla Hills. *See* Lloyd, *Narrative of a Journey*, vol. II, p. 227.
228. For more such examples, *see* G.A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India: Tibeto-Burman Family*, vol. III, pt. 1, rpt, Delhi 1967, pp. 83–4. *Also see* Jäschke, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, pp. xvi–xxi, where a comparative phonetic table of western and central Tibetan dialects has been provided. For a general survey of the loss of consonantal prefixes in Tibeto-Burmic language, *see* Robert Shafer, 'Prefixes in Tibeto-Burmic', *HJAS*, vol. 9., 1945, pp. 45–50.
229. Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet. A Political History*, New Haven and London, 1967, p. 176.
230. *See* Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, pt. II: *La-dvags rgyal-rabs*, pp. 43, 48, 117, 128; Tshe-brtan's account of the Dogra Wars, pp. 245–50; Basti Ram's account of the Dogra War, pp. 257–63.
231. Hutton, *JASB*, vol. IX, pt. 2, 1840, p. 494; *also see* pp. 510–11.
232. Ibid., p. 494.
233. Document nos 28–9 in the Political Consultations of the Foreign Department cited in Datta's, *Ladakh*, pp. 114, fn. 7.
234. J. Coldstream in his *Final Report of the Third Revised Settlement, 1910–1913 of the Parol, Lag Maharaja and Lag Sari—Sub-Tahsil Saraj—Rupi—Lahul and Spiti Waziris of the Kulu Sub-Division of the Kangra District*, Lahore, 1913, pt. V, p. 3 records that there were four noble (No-no) families residing at 'Kuling, Mane, Pin and Gyungal'. The inscription under discussion has added those of rGyu (Gyu) and Chu-rab. The exact identification of Chu-rab is problematic. Could this be Chabrang in the Lingti valley (near Gyungal now pronounced as Domal) or Chu-rab, situated on the opposite side of Kaurik, in the Tibet Autonomous Regions of the People's Republic of China? Kyed-gliṅ, however,

can safely be identified with Kyuling where a *jāgīr* land producing 36 *lacs* or *khals* of grain was given to No-no bsKal-bzaṅ as early as 1849; *see* Hay, 'Report on the Valley of Spiti', p. 450. He also had some land at Gyungal (Gienmuli of Hay) and Kaza.

235. *zhiṅ.*
236. *me-la* would make a better reading.
237. *chos.*
238. Two or three letters are illegible.
239. *tog.*
240. *legs.*
241. Additional *r* has been added to *ra* which reads *rruṅ*. The correct reading should be *da-duṅ*.
242. *tog.*
243. *legs.*
244. Perhaps *'di.*
245. *daṅ* seems to have been deleted by the writer.
246. *blob.*
247. *ṅaṅ dpal-'byor* would make a better reading.
248. *byuṅ.*
249. *sa* deliberately effaced.
250. *me-la.*
251. *dpon.*
252. *tog.*
253. *legs.*
254. Yet to be identified.
255. *me-me* means a grandfather both in Spiti and Kinnaur but in the inscription it has been used for the grand old man. *Also see* Cunningham, 'Notes on Moorcroft's Travels' p. 226. A. Gerard, 'A Vocabulary of the Koonawur Languages', *JASB*, vol. XI, pt. II, p. 479, columns 3 and 4.
256. Now pronounced as Poh, situated at a distance of 11 km from Tabo towards Kaza.
257. *chaṅ* is distilled from barley in Spiti.



VIII

Tabo Monastery Today and Its Future

The monastic complex at Tabo is under threat from two foreseable dangers: one, the environmental changes being brought about through the Desert Development Project (DDP) initiated by the Government of India. If at all the monsoon sets in the Spiti valley the people will have to redesign their flat-roofed mud houses and religious buildings to suit the changing climatic conditions. The consequent cultural loss would be immeasurable. Two, the increased intervention by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) within the complex over the years has spoiled the original forms of the temples and *stūpas*. The efforts of the ASI constantly treating the murals with organic solvents is appreciated; however, in September–October 1991, the ASI caused incalculable damage to the temples and *stūpas* by removing the centuries-old sifted clay walls put up around each temple. The removal of the clay walls has weakened the very foundation of the temples. The indigenous architecture of the Spiti valley has always been a part of Spiti's cultural heritage. Without understanding Spiti's fragile and sensitive environment the ASI's conservation department tampered with the clay walls that not only absorbed water and the summer heat but gave structural stability to the temple.[1] Figure 20 below explains how the sifted clay walls efficiently prevented the seepage of water as is evident from the murals on the dado section which have remained intact over the last several centuries. The replacement of these with stone walls has resulted in seepage in the gSer-khaṅ, 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba and the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ. Tabo lies in an earthquake-prone zone where light tremors can cause frequent cracks in the masonry walls. In the earthquake of 1974–75 the majority of the Public Works Department (PWD) buildings made of Reinforced cement and concrete (RCC), collapsed completely. Not a

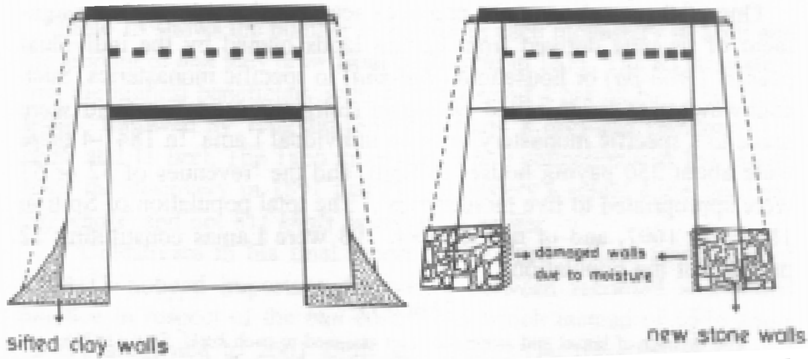


Fig. 20 Elevation of temple walls: (a) old clay walls;
(b) new stone walls

single RCC building survived at Leo and later the revenue office was shifted to Yangthang.

As the millenary celebrations approached the ASI decided to give a facelift to the monastery. Several tonnes of boulders were transported into the complex through tractors. A portion of the eastern wall was completely demolished to make an access for vehicles bringing in building material. There is no justification for this. Also there was no need to construct a water tank within the western end of the complex. The damage caused to the murals on the walls through the sky-lights introduced by the ASI in 1973–74[2] is incalculable. Sooner they are removed the better. They let in unwanted heat through transparent glasses which damage the murals. The constant plastering of the cracks on the roof may result in overburdening the roofs. Before further renovations are carried out, it would be a good idea for the ASI to consult the Earthquake Engineering Department of Roorkee University as well as the local masons.

The early Indian Buddhist monasteries received donations of various kinds for their sustenance from royal patrons, merchants and lay followers. Numerous inscriptions from the Mauryan times to the culmination of the Pāla rule in eastern India record the gift of a field, a village or sum of money to the monastic establishments. In some records the specific purpose of the grant or gift was specified. Inscriptional evidence at Tabo does not provide very encouraging information. There is indirect evidence from the murals showing prominent personalities from Gu-ge, Spiti and the contiguous areas. The paper inscription dated 1838 specifically says that Ṅag-dbaṅ blo-gros committed to pay twelve *khals* of produce to the monastery every year.[3]

One of the most common practices seems to have been the assignment of revenue derived from certain lands owned by the individual peasant (*groṅ-pa*) or household (*dud-kha*) to specific monasteries. Such endowments of lands called *chos-gzhi* (religious estate) in Spiti were made to a specific monastery or to an individual Lama. In 1841-4 there were about 250 paying houses in Spiti, and the 'revenues of 52 or 53 were appropriated to five monasteries'.[4] The total population of Spiti in 1849 was 1607, and of that number, 193 were Lamas constituting 12 per cent of the population.[5]

TABLE 13

The number of lamas and amount of *bun* assigned to each *koṭhī*, Spiti (1871)

Name of Monastery	Number of Lamas	Name of the *koṭhī*	Amount *khal*	Amount *bre*	Remarks
Braṅ-mkhar (Dankhar)	90	Sham	137	14	
dGe-lugs-pa		Chos-gzhi	120		17 *khals* assigned to the family of astrologers, and 40 to the Spituk monastery in Ladakh, have to be added to make up the sum total of the *bun*, i.e., 1,461 *khal* 7 *bre*.
		sTod-pa	73	17	
Total			331	11	
Ta-po	32	Sham	53	5	
dGe-lugs-pa		Chos-gzhi	134	19	
		sTod-pa	10	10	
Total			198	14	
dKyil (Ki)	100	Chos-gzhi	379	4	
dGe-lugs-pa		Bar-jik	14		
		sTod-pa	60		
Total			453	4	
sTen-rgyud (Tengyud)	60	Chos-gzhi	222		
		Bar-jik	87	16	
		sTod-pa	9	12	
Sa-skya-pa		Pin	20		
Total			339	8	
Pin	100	Pin	81	10	
rÑiṅ-ma-pa					
Grand total			1404	7	

Source: J.B. Lyall, *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Kangra District*, p. 130.

Table 13 shows the number of monks in each monastery in Spiti and the amount of *bun* they drew from each *koṭhī* in 1871. The Ki monastery was the highest beneficiary with 453 *khals* and 4 *bre* of *bun* from three *koṭhīs*, followed by Tengyud (339 *khals* and 8 *bre*) and Dankhar (331 *khals* and 11 *bre*). The Tabo monastery's *bun* collection was the lowest since the discovery in 1891 that Pin monastery's actual collection was 242 *khals*[6] and not 81½ *khals* as recorded earlier.

J. Coldstream in his final report of the third revised settlement of 1910–13 noticed important divergence between recorded and actual practice in respect of the *bun* collections which instead of 1676 *khals* 10 *bre* amounted to 2661 *khals* and 5 *bre*. The recorded and actual figures are shown below:[7]

koṭhī	*Entered in revenue record*		*Actually paid*	
	khal	*bre*	*khal*	*bre*
Chos-gzhi	851	03	1577	04
Sham	204	15	261	01
sTod-pa	77	02	194	11
Bar-jik	31	10	342	06
Pin	312	00	286	03
Total	1676	10	2661	5

This *bun* collected from each *koṭhī* was allotted to each monastery as shown in Table 14 given below.

Apart from the *bun* collections, the monasteries received a share of the revenue collected from the nonassigned grain called *nas-khral*.[9] The revenue assigned to the monasteries was endowed to them by the state from time to time. The monastic due was collected by the Lamas themselves. The monks were, therefore obligated to the peasants from whom they received payments. The efforts of the British administrators of Spiti failed to change this system. As Egerton writes:

I explained that the government could not sanction the collection of a compulsory grain tax and could not interfere if payment were withheld, but if zemindars chose to make over a certain amount of land for the maintenance of the monasteries, without diminution of the government revenue . . . . The monks seemed to relish the idea very much as it would give them a 'material guarantee' for their livelihood; but the zemindars unanimously objected. They urged that under the present arrangement the monks had a direct interest in the welfare of their parishioners . . . whereas by the proposed arrangement the monks would be quite independent; they would cease to look after their welfare, spiritual and temporal . . .[10]

TABLE 14

Divergence between record and practice in the amount of *bun* collection of each monastery in Spiti (1910–13)

Nos.	Beneficiaries	Amount by Revenue Records		Amount by Practice		Remarks
		khal	*bre*	*khal*	*bre*	
1.	Bran-mkhar (Dankhar)	367	0	474	13	
2.	Ta-po (Tabo)	199	0	244	9	
3.	dKyil (Ki)	446	0	981	3	
4.	sTen-rgyud (Tengyud)	374	0	729	11	
5.	Pin	242	0	231	8	
6.	Owners in Pin *koṭhī*	25	0	64	–	As a subscription to Pin horse fair
7.	Astrologers	32	0		–	As a revenue free land to Tashigong.[8]
	Total	1,685	0	2,725	5	

Source: J. Coldstream, *Final Report of the Third Revised Settlement, 1910–1913 of the Parol, Lag Maharaja and Lag Sari-Sub-tahsil Saraj–Rupi–Lahul and Spiti Waziris of the Kulu Sub-Division of the Kangra district*, pt. V, p. 8 and pp. 12–15.

Monasteries held a few pieces of land under their direct control. The fields directly held by the monasteries paid no revenue and were very few in number, amounting to 27 holdings (as against 330 holdings of regular tax-paying peasants) with 3.74 per cent of the total cultivated land of Spiti in 1883-84.[11] The statistical data on land owned by each monastery remains yet to be collected. I was able to see the revenue records of Tabo monastery. Table 15 makes it clear that the monastery owns land measuring 1-01-95 hectares. Taking into consideration the total cultivable and non-cultivable land of Tabo village, the monastery owns nearly 2.12 per cent of the land.[12] Astonishingly, the Patwari of Poh circle informed me that no land is owned by the Dankhar monastery. The Kungri monastery has under its control more than 10 hectares of land scattered in the thirteen villages of the Pin *koṭhī*.[13]

Buddhist monasteries have always provided education to its lay following. The monastery at present runs a Buddhist school in the premises of the new monastic complex constructed in 1982-83. The credit for reviving the ancient educational traditions of Tabo goes to gSer-skong

Rinpoche who visited the Spiti valley several times. He was instrumental in bringing two *dge-bśes*, namely bSod-nams dbang-'dus and Ye-shes chos-ldan from Mundgod (Karnataka) to Tabo. He was responsible for bringing His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to Tabo to perform the Kālacakra initiation from 12 to 26 July 1983. Unfortunately, gSer-skong Rinpoche died on 28 August 1983 at Kibbar. He is reverentially remembered by the people of the region who have built several *mchod-rten* enshrining his *śarīra-dhātus*. His incarnation, discovered in Lari village, was enthroned in a ceremony held at Tabo on 8 September 1988. He is now being educated at Mundgod (Pl. LXXIX). On the occasion



Pl. LXXIX gSer-skong Rinpoche along with *dge-bśes* bSod-nams dbang-'dus in November 1988, soon after the enthronement ceremony

of 1000 years of Tabo's foundation, His Holiness conducted another Kālacakra initiation for a large number of devotees between June–July 1996.[14]

TABLE 15

Land owned by the Tabo monastery*

No.	Khataunī no.	Owner	Kāśtakāra	Hadbast no.	Total area in hectares: Cultivable	Area not available for cultivation	Grand total
1	87	Tabo Monastery	Monastery	174/1	irrigated(i) 0-67-66	fallow land 0-03-68	
					irrigated(ii) 0-09-14	barren 0-18-59	
2.	88	—	kabjā** ābapāśa kunindagān	—		barren 0-02-88	
Total of cultivable and non cultivable land					0-76-80	0-25-15	1-01-95

* Data provided by the Patwari of the Poh Patwar Circle on 8 August 1993. The true copy of Hadbast no. 174/1 is in the possession of the author.

**The barren land measuring 0-25-15 hectares is with the people who irrigate the land of the monastery.

The monastery now has about thirty five full-time monks (Pl. LXXX); the number has doubled since AD 1042 when the Buddhist community of Tabo consisted of seventeen monks (Pl. LXXXI). The education imparted to the monks is a mixture of the traditional and modern. Table 16 shows the detailed curriculum taught during the session of 1988-89. Not much has changed since then. The curriculum seems to be quite adequate for the *grwa-phrug* (school child), but the *dge-tshul* and *dge-sloṅ* (Pl. LXXXI) need to go for further trainning to advanced centres of Buddhist learning at Dharamsala, Mundgod and Sarnath. These centres are of course no match for those at Lhasa, Tashilunpo, Ganden, Sera and Drepung. The complete cessation of ties with Tibet after the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 has resulted in the impoverishment of the economic and religious condition of the people of Spiti and upper Kinnaur unlikely to be fulfilled with the continued presence of Tibetans in India. Normalization of relations between India and China is a pre-requisite for a cultural renaissance in this Himalayan region. The re-opening of the Indo-Tibetan border trade through Shipki



Pl. LXXX The Buddhist community of Tabo in 1996. The abbot bSod-nams dbang-'dus is sitting on a chair in the centre

TABLE 16

Time-table for the students of Buddhist Philosophy School, Tabo monastery

Timings	Curriculum for the year 1988-89*		
6:00 a.m.	To get up with the ringing of the first bell		
6:15–7:30	To assemble in the hall of the new monastery Morning prayers		
7:30–8:00	A half hour break: breakfast and tea in the kitchen		
8:00–12:00	To assemble for the class	Learning lessons of the previous day	bSod-nams dbang-'dus lectures on prayers and *mudrās*
12:00–1:00		LUNCH-BREAK	
1:00–4:30	Painting class by Tobs-rgyas	Tibetan grammar and language classes	
4:30–5:30	Hindi class	English class	
5:30–7:30	Evening break	Dinner in the kitchen	
7:30–9:30	Evening prayers	debate session	conclude the debate and disperse

*I thank Tshe-bstan bzang-po for providing me with-the-time-table of the Buddhist Philosophy School. I interviewed him on 26 June 1989.



Pl. LXXXI The Buddhist community of Tabo in AD 1042

Pass in 1994 is a step toward this. It is inevitable that the society and economy of the western Himalayan region will undergo a tremendous change in the next few decades. How Tabo and a dozen other monasteries will respond to the new challenges will depend on the organization of their monastic community and more importantly the leadership within the monastic establishment.

NOTES

1. At Nako an alternative arrangement has been made to give structural stability to the temple-walls by piling up pebbles at the four corners.
2. *IAR 1973–74*, p. 71.
3. For complete translation, see ch. VII.
4. J. D. Cunningham, 'Notes on Moorcroft's Travels', p. 211.
5. W. C. Hay, 'Report on the Valley of Spiti', p. 437.
6. J. Coldstream, *Final Report*, p. 3.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. The hamlet of Tashigong (*koṭhī* sTod-pa) was a *muafi* in favour of medicine men who also got 17 *khals* of barley assigned in Kaza. The Tashigong land was supposed to measure 17 *khals* (Coldstream, ibid., p. 8, fn.).
9. In 1871, the Lamas of Dankhar monastery received 30 *khals* of the *naskhral* collections. Also 50 *khals* were spent on the Dankhaṛ November fair. The amount remained unchanged until 1912. *See* Coldstream, *Final Report*, p. 7.
10. P. H. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour*, p. 30.
11. *Gazetteer of the Kangra District, Vol. II: Kulu, Lahul, and Spiti, 1883–4*, Lahore, 1884, p. 132.
12. The total land, according to the census of 1981, was 48 hectares, see Census of India: 1981, *District Census Handbook: Lahul and Spiti District*, Simla, 1982, p. 88, item no. 33.
13. These villages are Chidang, Kungri, Ensa, Tangti Yongma, Tangti Gongma, Mud, Takshan, Sagnam, Upper Guling, Rajgaon, Teling, Guling and Bharpa.
14. Two other recent Kālacakras were performed at Rekong Peo in Kinnaur from 3 to 12 August 1992, and Jispa in Lahaul-Spiti from 11 to 25 July 1994.

Appendix I

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM THE *DPAṄ-SKOṄ-PHYAG-BRGYA-PA MDO*

phyogs bcu'i saṅs rgyas thams cad la phyag 'tshal lo || śar phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas rin chen 'byuṅ gnas de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || lho phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas mya ṅan med pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || nub phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas rin chen 'od 'phro de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas rgyal ba'i dbaṅ po de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ śar mtshams kyi saṅs rgyas teṅ ṅe 'dzin gyi glaṅ po dam pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || śar lho mtshams kyi saṅs rgyas pad mo dam pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || lho nub mtshams kyi saṅs rgyas ñi ma'i dkyil 'khor snaṅ ba dam pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la 'tshal lo || nub byaṅ mtshams kyi saṅs rgyas gdugs dam pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || 'od gi phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas pad mo'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || bla ma phyogs kyi saṅs rgyas dga' pa'i dpal de bzhin gśegs pa la phyag 'tshal lo || (Fol. 3b) śar phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' 'od zer kun nas 'byuṅ ba la phyag 'tshal lo || lho phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' mya ṅan med pas byin la phyag 'tshal lo || nub phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' spyod pa'i blo gros la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' rgyal bas byin la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ śar mtshams kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' rnam par rgyal bas rnam par gnon pa la phyag 'tshal lo || śar lho mtshams kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' lag na pad me la phyag 'tshal lo || lho nub mtshams kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' ñi ma rab tu snaṅ ba la phyag 'tshal lo || nub byaṅ mtshams kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' rin chen mchog la phyag 'tshal lo || 'od gi phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' pad mo dam pa la phyag 'tshal lo || bla ma phyogs kyi byaṅ chub sems dpa' dga' bas byin la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' kun tu spyan ras gzigs kyi dbaṅ phyug la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' byams pa la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub

sems dpa' nam mkha'i sñiṅ po la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' kun tu bzaṅ po la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' phyag na rdo rje la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' 'jam dpal la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' sgrib pa thams cad rnam par sel ba la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' sa'i sñiṅ po la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' dri ma med par grags pa la phyag 'tshal lo || byaṅ chub sems dpa' mthu chen thob la phyag 'tshal lo ||

Appendix II

THE *BRAG-PHUG DGON-PA* (CAVE MONASTERY) OF TABO

A series of caves have been scooped out on the northern hillside at Tabo many of which are now totally covered with the gravel sliding down the slope. The dark, horse-shoe type entrances of about two dozen caves can easily be seen from the monastic complex below. Many caves are now deserted and several of them cannot be accessed because of blocked entrances. The plate IIa of Tucci's *Indo-Tibetica*[1] makes it clear that there were three or four structures just below the poplar trees. The cave under discussion is one of these. The frontal structures of the others have vanished. The local Buddhist community calls this cave *brag-phug dgon-pa*, i.e. the cave monastery.

The Architectural Features

The door of the 'Du-khaṅ can be approached through a paved footpath constructed by the ASI along the southern wall of the hall and the 'Du-khaṅ. The two outer structures are recent additions. When they were built is not certain but they were there in 1933.[2] The flat roof of the 'Du-khaṅ is supported by four wooden pillars. The 'Du-khaṅ opens up to another hall through a 85 cm wide passage. The walls of the hall are uneven and unequal in length (Fig. 21). The northern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ has two openings: one in the north-western corner goes to a small room of unequal proportions, the other leads through a door of 75 cm by 1.30 m into the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (sanctum).

The rectangular sanctum measures 6.58 m by 4.34 m, excluding the pedestal of 92 cm left unexcavated at the end of the north wall. The roof is supported by four wooden pillars. The thickness of the walls could not be ascertained but those of the outer structures vary from 48

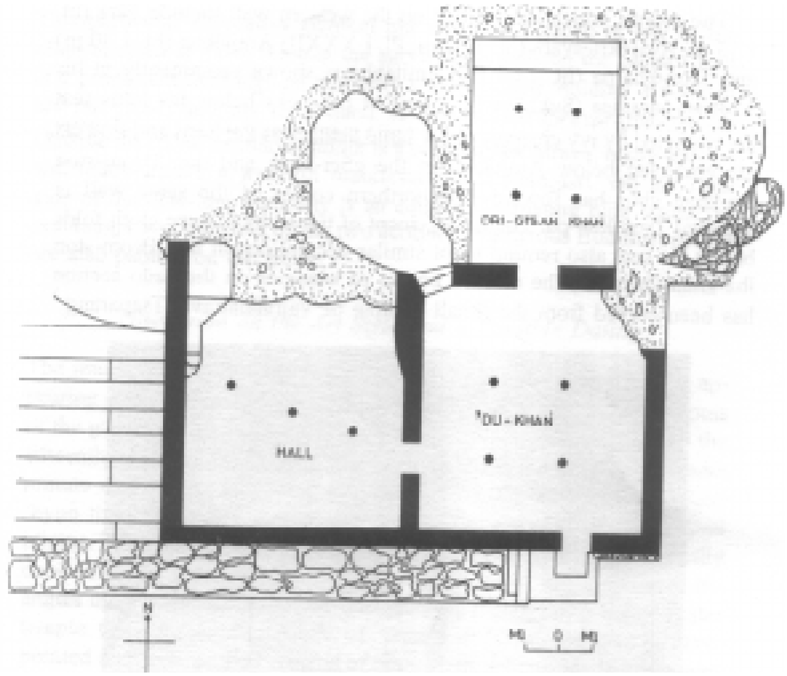


Fig. 21 Plan of the Brag-phug dgon-pa (Cave Monastery), Tabo

cm to 50 cm. No clay or wooden sculpture has been noticed in the cave monastery.

Mural Decoration

The western, northern and eastern walls of the temple preserve an astonishing number of murals considering the neglect through which this shrine has passed. The central wall depicts the most popular decorative theme, which was the favoured one among the dGe-lugs-pa community of Tabo, showing Buddha (ht. 159 cm) along with his disciples. On the extreme left and right are shown Mañjuśrī (ht. 99 cm) and Maitreya (ht. 94 cm). Here is an interesting depiction of a single faced *bhadramukha* above Buddha's head, similar to the ones in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po and the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ.

The murals which are painted on the western wall include Tārā (ht. 1.13 m; Avalokiteśvara (ht 1.60 m; Pl. LXXXII) Amitābha (ht. 1.40 m) and Tsoṅ-kha-pa (ht. 1.60 m). Amitābha is shown prominently in his western paradise (Sukhāvatī). A pair of peacocks below his lotus seat are encircled by ivy creepers in the same manner as the lions and flowers are encircled below Amitābha in the gSer-khaṅ and the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba. Towards the northern corner of the same wall is depicted Tsoṅ-kha-pa. The arrangement of lions, the M-type cloth folds below his seat also remind us of similar decorations in the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po. The crossed border of triangles on the dado section has been copied from the Small Temple of Vajrabhairava, Tsaparang.[3]



Pl. LXXXII An eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara with a round aureole, western wall, cave monastery

This particular decorative element has not been noticed in any of the other temples at Tabo. Among the surviving murals on the eastern wall is a prominent dGe-lugs-pa authority shown seated, holding a book in his left hand, and his right hand in *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*. Outside his round *prabhāmaṇḍala* is a blue Vajrabhairava, many-headed and many-armed, a wrathful manifestation of Mañjuśrī. On the right side of the dGe-lugs authority is an equally fascinating blue Vaiḍūrya-prabharāja accompanied by his two acolytes. Numerous Buddhist deities are also painted on the walls.

Discussion on the Art Style and a Possible Dating

The murals of the cave monastery retain the characteristic features appearing in styles VII to XII.[4] Since they do not embody all the idioms of the gSer-khaṅ or dKyil-khaṅ's murals, they cannot be assigned to the fifteenth century AD. The use of round and oval-shaped aureoles with minute decorations similar to those in the mGon-khaṅ and the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ, show a preponderance of Central Tibetan and Nepali idioms. There is a notable absence of the chain of *kīrttimukhas* normally depicted at the intersection of the walls and the roof. Multi-coloured triangles used in the border on the dado section makes this a slightly later temple than the Small Temple of Vajrabhairava at Tsaparang. Five-pointed and low-profiled crowns of both Mañjuśrī and Maitreya resemble those of the same deities painted on the central wall of the dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ. Stylistically, the murals of the cave monastery are much closer to Style XII. It would be not wholly wrong to designate this style as XIIa.

NOTES

1. Tucci, *Temples of Western Tibet* (Indo-Tibetica, III.1), p. 22, pl. IIa.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. (Indo-Tibetica, III.2), p. 93, pls XLI-XLII.
4. For example, *see* ch. VI.

Appendix III

THE ABBOTS OF TABO MONASTERY ACCORDING TO *VAIḌŪRYA-SER-PO*

The *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po* contains invaluable information on the monasteries of the dGe-lugs-pa sect located in Ladakh, Spiti, Kinnaur and Western Tibet. The author of this work, Saṅs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, gathered his information from the census of the monasteries ordered by the Fifth Dalai Lama (AD 1617–82) in AD 1663, and finished compiling the work in AD 1698.[1] The work provides us with the names of the fourteen abbots of Tabo monastery,[2] the majority of whom belonged to Tabo and Lari villages. By assigning a period of about twenty years to each abbot, we may place them between *c.* AD 1418–1678:

AD	1418	Pi-ti sLob-dpon dge-'phel
	1438	Phyag-rdor
	1458	Thaṅ-pa rin-bzaṅ
	1478	rTa-po[3] gYaṅ-dpal
	1498	A-ni[4] Chos-rje
	1518	La-ri-pa Sron-bu[5]
	1538	rTa-po[6] Rab-byams-pa dmag-żor
	1558	dBus-pa Tshe-riṅ rgyal-mtshan
	1578	Kra-thuṅ bsTan-pa rgya-mtsho
	1598	Saṅs-rgyal[7] chos-'phel
	1618	Blo-bzaṅ rgyal-mtshan[8]
	1638	La-ri-pa
	1658	dBus-pa[9] Blo-bzaṅ tshul-khrims
	1678	rTa-po[10] Blo-bzaṅ tshe-riṅ

It seems very likely that the monastery was taken over by the dGe-lugs-pa sect sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century. Curiously, the inscriptional evidence within the monastic complex does not provide us any of the above mentioned names and therefore, the list of the abbots and the monks of Tabo given in the *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po* assume significance in the absence of other sources.

NOTES

1. *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, p. xiii.
2. For the spellings of the fourteen abbots and their localities we have relied on Tucci's; 'Tibetan Notes', *HJAS*, vol. XII, 1949, p. 489.
3. *rta-so* in *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, p. 223, l. 17.
4. Could this be Ani, now in the outer Saraj region of Kulu district?
5. *srin-bu* in *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, l. 17.
6. *rta-si* in ibid., l. 18.
7. *rgyas* in ibid., l. 19.
8. *rgyal-ba* in ibid.
9. Omitted in ibid.
10. *rta-so* in ibid., l. 20.

Appendix IV

COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES ON TABO MONASTERY

Dates	History	Architecture	Scuplture	Mural	Inscription	Remarks
AD **996**	Ye-śes-'od	gTug-lag-khaṅ	33 clay sculptures along with Amitābha and his acolytes Two missing wooden sculptures Carved stone base	Murals in the sGo-khaṅ and Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ	Historical and devotional inscriptions in the sGo-khaṅ	
AD **1042**	Byaṅ-chub-'od renovated the gTsug-lag-khaṅ	No change in the archi-tecture of the gTsug-lag-khaṅ		Extensive mural decorations in the 'Du-khaṅ and Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ	Renovation inscription Inscriptions of the Nor-bzaṅ story and on the life of the Buddha completed Three Śāradā inscriptions	Majority of the *Prajñāpāramitā* class literature translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan The largest corpus of Tabo manuscripts composed during AD **996–1050**
AD **1050–1100**	Religious council organized by rTse-lde at Tabo(?) in AD **1076**	Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	Statue of Byams-pa(?) Carved wooden door and stone bases Two clay statues of Rin-chen bzaṅ-po Mañjughoṣa	Fragments of murals survive in the sanctum	Salutations to Tārā inscription	

AD **1064–1100**	The founder of the bKa'-gdams-pa sect 'Brom-ston died in AD **1064** The breaking up of the western Tibetan 'confederation' at the beginning of the twelfth century AD	'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chuṅ-ba	Carved wooden door of 1 : 2 ratio and a stone base	No mural of the period survives	No inscription	
c. AD **1450**	The Red Temple of Tsaparang rebuilt by Blo-bzaṅ rab-brtan and his wife	gSer-khaṅ	Carved wooden brackets	Entire decorations on the walls represent style VII	Lan-tsha dedicatory inscriptions	An eleventh century wooden sculpture re-used on the bracket
c. AD **1462–1500**	The minister dPon-btsun of Dankhar The king bSod-nams-lde; Bu-ston (AD **1290–1364**)	dKyil-khaṅ		Historical and religious murals	Inscriptions of historical and iconographic interest	Plan of Tabo complex, six temples in a row Plan of Tholing complex
c. AD **1475–1500**	Blo-bzaṅ rab-brtan's great-grandsons built the White and the Vajrabhairava temples at Tsaparang	mGon-khaṅ	No significant wood work	Religious murals	No inscription	The murals of the 'Brom-ston lha-khaṅs chuṅ-ba repainted in the beginning of the sixteenth century AD

Dates	History	Architecture	Scuplture	Mural	Inscription	Remarks
AD **1600–40**	Seṅ-ge rnam-rgyal's conquest of Ladakh in AD **1630** Spiti under Ladakh from 1630–84 Lahaul under Kulu's dominance	'Brom-ston lha-khaṅ chen-po		All decorations on the walls represent style XI Two main themes dominate: sMan-bla and the *mdzad-pa bcu-gñis*	Inscriptions of iconographic and narrative character written in *dbu-can* and *dbu-med* scripts	
AD **1650–1700**		dKar-'byuṅ lha-khaṅ		Religious murals	No inscription	
c. AD **1750**	The rulers of Kulu further consolidated their position in Lahaul but Spiti remained under Ladakh			Redecorations of the Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	Inscriptions written in the *tshugs-riṅ, tshugs-thuṅ* and *tshugs-ma* sub-varieties of the *dbu-med* characters Example of War-tu script	
1838–1908	Spiti attacked by Dogra army and gTsug-lag-khaṅ damaged in 1837 Thomas Hutton visited Tabo on 16 June 1838	rJe-bla-ma lha-khaṅ		Religious murals	Majority of the insciptional panels completed in 1974 under the guidance of the Lama bSam-gtan rdo-rje	Some murals from the earlier periods on the west and the north walls

1982–83	New Monastery completed	Kālacakra held at Tabo from 12 to 26 July 1983. gSer-skong Rinpoche died on 28 Aug. 1983 at Kibbar
1988		Enthronement ceremony of gSer-skong Rinpoche's incarnation on 8 September 1988
1996		Millenary celebrations and Kālacakra initiation by His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama from 24 June to 4 July 1996

Appendix V

TABO: ETYMOLOGY AND TIBETAN VARIANTS

Tabo is written in Tibetan inscriptions as *ta-po, sta-po, lta-po, rta-po* (horse); in literary works as *rta-pho or ta-pho* (male-horse), and *rta-so* with two variants, *ta-so* and *rta-si* (horse-teeth). It seems that there were two distinct forms: the first form is noticed inscribed on a rock and subsequently on the walls at Tabo; the second form is traceable only in Tibetan literature. There might have been many more variations of the second type, but I have picked up only selective examples from the Tibetan sources utilized in this study. *Ta-po* and *ta-so* were two of the earliest main forms, while all others seem to have been derived from them as shown below:

Initial forms	*Their variants in inscriptions and literary works*	
Ta-po:	(i)	Ta-po
	(ii)	sTa-po
	(iii)	rTa-po
	(iv)	lTa-po
	(v)	lTa-pho
	(vi)	rTa-pho*
	(vii)	Ta-pho
Ta-so:	(i)	rTa-so
	(ii)	Ta-so
	(iii)	rTa-si

Four inscriptional variants of Tabo can be seen at seven places on the walls of the three temples. These include the gTsug-lag-khaṅ,

*Nos vi and vii occur in Rin-chen bzaṅ-po's biographies (see Table 1, sr. no. 9)

Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ and the dKyil-khaṅ. This form has been derived from the initial *ta-po* noticed on an eighth-century rock inscription at Tabo. The fifth variant (sr. no. 9) has been found on the *maṇi*-wall at Tabo (see Table 17).

TABLE 17

Tibetan variants of Tabo written on the wall inscriptions*

Sr. No.	Name of the temple	Exact Location	Distinct form	Date
1.	Rock inscription	Tabo	Ta-po	*c.* AD 700–800
2.	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ (eastern wall)	Ta-po	AD 1042
3.	dKyil-khaṅ	northern wall	Ta-po	*c.* AD 1475–1500
4.	Byams-pa'i lha-khaṅ	eastern wall	Ta-po	*c.* AD 1750
5.	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	'Du-khaṅ (northern wall)	Ta-po (1.9)	AD 1838
6.	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	'Du-khaṅ (northern wall)	sTa-po (1.6)	AD 1838
7.	gTsug-lag-khaṅ	'Du-khaṅ (eastern wall)	lTa-pho (1.2)	AD 1838
8.	8 gTsug-lag-khaṅ	'Du-khaṅ (eastern wall)	lTa-po (1.5)	AD 1847
9.	*Maṇi*-wall	on the state highway no. 32 going to Kaza	rTa-po	undated

* For a complete translation of each inscription, see ch. VII.

What is clear from Table 17 appended above is that *ta-po* is the earliest initial form written on the rock inscription and the writer adopted the same form on the eastern wall of the Dri-gtsaṅ-khaṅ adjacent to the inscription put up by Byaṅ-chub-'od in AD 1042. This form has consistently been maintained until 1847. The paper inscription pasted on the northern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ dated 1838, apart from *ta-po* (l. 9)[1] has another variant, *sta-po* (l. 6). The paper inscription written on the eastern wall of the 'Du-khaṅ dated 1838 has sightly a different form, *lta-pho*, which is perhaps derived from *rta-pho*. The change from *r* to *l* and *s* is quite frequent in Western Tibetan spoken in Ladakh, Spiti and Kinnaur. The *maṇi*-wall inscription noticed by me on the left side of the highway

going from Tabo to Kaza records the names of several donors from Tabo. It has retained *rta-po* as the name of the village. This form, *rta-so*, does not occur in any inscription from Tabo. This form is recorded in the *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po* compiled in AD 1698.[2]

Etymologically, the meaning of both forms is quite clear: the former stands for a 'horse' and the latter for 'horse-teeth'. The Spiti valley seems to be a celebrated location for a rare breed of Chumurti and Spiti horses—the camel of the cold desert. I believe that prior to the breeding of horses in the Pin valley the main centre was located somewhere near Tabo. The second form derives perhaps from the fact that all the snow-capped peaks around Tabo look like horse-teeth, thus the usage *ta-so*. The Buddhist community of Tabo persistently used *ta-po* which is very close to the present name. The loss of superscribed *r* and *l* in Tibetan initial consonantal clusters is possible as amply shown by Walter Simon.[3] The loss of *r* in the Tibetan *rta-po* resulted in the use of *ta-po* conveying the same meaning without any linguistic and grammatical imperfection. The change from *r* to *s* is also possible in dental stem-initials hence the occurrence of *sta-po* instead of *rta-po*. Other such examples can be cited: *rtuṅ-ba* = *stuṅ-ba* 'to shorten'; *rten-pa* = *sten-pa* 'to adhere to'.[4] In the light of the above it becomes clear that there is no rationale in using either *ta-pho* or *rta-pho* for these forms have no inscriptional and phonetical justifications, nor are they found in any inscription within or without the monastic complex. Thus we have used Tabo throughout the text. The earliest form *ta-po* seems to be of Zhaṅ-zhuṅ origin and later Tibetanized to *rta-po* or *sta-so*.

NOTES

1. See transcription given above in ch. VII. On plate LXXVIII one can see *ta-po* in line 8. Taking into consideration the additions below this line I have transcribed it in line 9 so that the contents of each line become uniformally divided.
2. *Vaiḍūrya-ser-po*, p. 223.
3. Walter Simon, 'Loss of *l* or *r* in Tibetan Initial Consonantal Clusters', *BSOAS*, vol. XXXVII, no. 2, 1974, pp. 442–5; also his article, 'Iotization and Palatalization in Classical Tibetan', *BSOAS*, vol. XXXVIII, 1975, pp. 611–14.
4. Simon in *BSOAS*, vol. XXVII, p. 443.

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